

DISCOURSES

CONCERNING THE

T R U T H

OF THE

Christian Religion.



L O N D O N :

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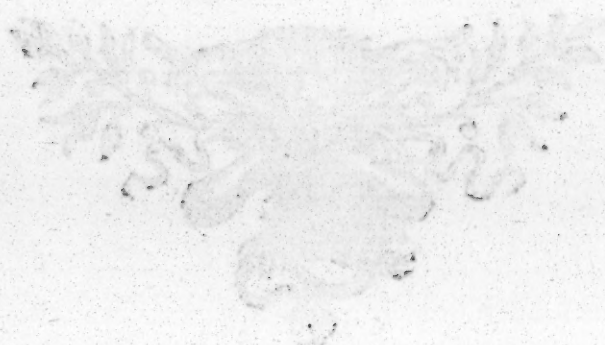
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DISCOURSES

CONCERNING THE

NEW TESTAMENT

Christian Religion.





P R E F A C E.



H E R E is a system relating to religion and to the state of things which is certainly true, whether we believe it or no. It greatly concerns us to have right notions about it, and to provide, as far as we can, for our future well-being, if this life should be the passage to another.

To shew that there is sufficient evidence of the truth of Christianity, to illustrate some parts of it, and to defend it against some objections, is the design

design of the following Discourses, to which before I dismiss the Reader, I beg leave to detain him a few minutes, whilst I make an apology for this undertaking against an obvious objection.

Many are the books already extant upon the subject; Fabricius has reckon'd up some hundreds, and doubtless several treatises might be added which have escaped even his diligence. What occasion is there for any more, in a country which has produced so many excellent writers in the cause, and where learned persons are continually appointed to discourse professedly upon it?

As to the number of treatises, it may be replied, that some of them are
grown

grown very scarce, and others are fallen into oblivion, for which reason an Author may be permitted to step in and take a place made vacant by one who is now * gone to rest. And though it be presumption to think of equalling the great men who have laboured before us, and whose reputation is establis'd, yet since there are many who had rather peruse a † new book than a good book, their humour should not be totally disregarded.

The same truths may be placed in various views; and amongst men whose taste and fancy differ so widely, an argument shall seem persuasive, and a remark pertinent to one,

* Nunc placida compositus pace quiescit.

† Τὴν γὰρ αἰοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ' ἀνθρώποι,

ἢ τὴν ἀκρόβιτον νεωτέραν ἀμφιπέληται.

Homer. Odyss. A. 351.

which by another is slighted and rejected. It seems therefore convenient that several persons should try their skill, and propose their thoughts upon a matter of such importance, since every one may reasonably hope to gain over, or confirm, or secure some reader of a corresponding turn of mind. Even the weakest contriver of a foolish and forlorn system must be very unlucky, if he finds not a few approvers and followers: he possesses at least a quality somewhat like electricity, which attracts chaff and straws; and what the old Greek Poet observed in his days is as true now;

Ὡς ἀπὸ τῶν ὁμοίων ἄγει θεὸς ὡς τῶν ὁμοίων

———— Some overruling Pow'r
Ever delights to couple like to like.

The understandings of men are as
the chords of musical instruments :
when

when a string sounds, the strings which are unisons to it, if within proper distance, will vibrate.

None then ought to be discouraged, though his abilities be no more than common, from appearing in defence of truths in which all are interested. Invention, Wit, Sagacity, Eloquence, when they offer their service on this occasion, merit a kind reception. Behind these follows modest and slow-paced Industry, willing to take the lowest place, and yet sometimes more useful than some of the former, and verifying the proverb, *Claudus viator omnia refert certiora*, A lame traveller brings the best intelligence.

If, amidst some imperfections, an argument, which is not new, be set in a new light, if an objection be re-
a 2
moved;

*moved, if a sentiment be so expressed
 as to leave a good effect upon the
 mind, if an ingenious, or useful, or
 remarkable passage, not commonly
 known, be produced from an ancient
 Writer, if somewhat be suggested
 worthy of consideration, and the
 Reader be put upon thinking, and
 the Author perform the humble of-
 fice of an Index which points out the
 roads to the passenger, the work
 ought not to be treated with con-
 tempt.*

*Shall I add yet farther, that such
 persons deserve something beyond a
 bare permission to utter their thoughts?
 When the intention seems upright,
 and the end proposed is to make
 men better and wiser, what is not
 ill executed should be received with
 approbation, with good words and
 good*

good wishes, and small faults and inadvertencies should be candidly excused. Much more than this it may be vanity or folly to expect.

And here I thought to have concluded; but these words of Grotius come so often into my mind, that I cannot forbear to quote them. Lapsum Origenem in quibusdam rebus negari non potest. Quale mihi nequid eveniat, Deum supplex precor, soleoque scriptis meis hanc addere cautionem, ut si quid ibi sit alienum dogma [a veritate et sacris Literis] id pro non scripto habeatur.

In this I would willingly joyn with Grotius. Whosoever is in the disposition which he describes, takes the best way to secure himself from dangerous

dangerous errors; and if he has any wrong notions, there is reason to hope that they proceed not from a bad mind, but are only the Issues of unfortunate Inquiry.

JOHN JORTIN.



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THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

Of the Prejudices of the Jews and
GENTILES.

WHEN we read over the history of *Christ*, and consider the variety of beneficial miracles which he wrought, and his mild and inoffensive behaviour, it must at first sight seem very strange that the *Jews* should reject him and put him to death ; that they, who had so long expected and so greatly desired the coming of the *Messias*, should persecute and kill him when he appeared amongst them, and so well confirmed his right to the character which he assumed.

When we consider farther how the Apostles afterwards confirmed the truth of his resurrection, how many miracles they wrought, teaching the same holy doctrines as their Master had taught, and imitating his good example, and how innocent and virtuous the behaviour of the first Christians was, it seems also strange that the *Jewish* nation should not have yielded to such Evidence.

B

And

And though the Apostles had great Success in the heathen world, and brought over multitudes to the faith, yet it appears unaccountable that more of the *Gentiles* were not moved to receive the Gospel by the miracles which they wrought in its behalf, and that few of the rich, of the great, and of the learned were at first converted.

We are inclined to think that if we had lived in those days, and seen what the *Jews* and *Gentiles* then saw, we should readily have embraced the Gospel, and that if any person in our sight should heal all distempers, and remove all infirmities, and raise the dead, we should submit to any thing that he commanded, and receive any thing that he taught, unless it were plainly absurd and contrary to common sense. They who reject* the Gospel, object to the miracles recorded in it, that the bulk of the Jewish nation was not converted by them, and that in the Pagan world the poorer and meaner sort of the people were chiefly the first proselytes to the Christian religion, and the learned and powerful for the most

* See Limborch *Collat. cum Judæo*, p. 63. where the *Jew* uses this kind of argument.

part stood out; till at length the Roman Emperors became Christians, and what by force, what by example, brought their opinion into fashion, and established it in the world.

But whosoever shall well consider the many causes concurring to keep the *Jews* and *Gentiles* from embracing the Gospel, will cease to judge it strange that so many of them persevered in their unbelief.

One great and general cause to which the infidelity of the *Jews* should be ascribed, is their wickedness; and that certainly is a cause sufficient to produce such an effect. If a man is vitious, he is disposed to reject evident truths, and to embrace ridiculous opinions. That vice weakens the understanding, infatuates the judgment, and hinders it from discerning between truth and falsehood, especially in matters of morality and religion, is affirmed constantly in Scripture, is highly agreeable to reason, and perpetually testified by experience. That the *Jews* were then very wicked is plain from several passages of the New Testament,

and * *Josephus* informs us of enormous villainies practised by many of them, of which no Pagan nation was perhaps ever guilty.

Suppose a man sensual and debauched, proud and conceited, uncharitable and malicious, unjust and worldly-minded, suppose him not to have been educated in gross ignorance of his duty, but to have had sufficient opportunities of acquiring some degrees of sacred knowledge, and by

* *Vid. B. J. iv. v. vi. passim.*

Καθέκασον μὲν ἔν ἐπεξίεναι τὴν παρενομίαν θυῶν, ἀδύνατον. συνελόγησά δ' εἰπεῖν, μή τις πόλιν ἄλλην τοιαῦτα πεπονθέναι, μή τις γενεὰν ἐξ αἰῶνος γεγονέναι κακίας γονιμώτεραν. v. x. 5.

Οἶμαι Ῥωμαίων βραδυνόντων ἐπὶ τῆς ἀλίστητος, ἢ καταποθῆναι ἂν ὑπὸ χάσματος, ἢ κατακλυθῆναι τὴν πόλιν, ἢ τῆς τῆς Σοδομηνῆς μέλαλαβῆν κεραινές. πολὺ γὰρ τῶν τοιαῦτα παθόντων ἐνεγκε γενεὰν ἀθεωρίεσαν. v. xiii. 6. Ed. Haverc.

To give a particular account of all their iniquities, would be endless; thus much, in general, it may suffice to say, that there never was a city which suffered such miseries, nor a race of men from the beginning of the world who so abounded in wickedness.

I verily believe that if the Romans had delayed to destroy these wicked wretches, the city would either have been swallowed up by the earth, or overwhelmed by the waters, or struck with fire from heaven as another Sodom; for it produced a far more impious generation than those who suffered such punishment.

his

his evil disposition to have been led either to disbelieve plain truths, or to continue in sin against the dictates of his own conscience, or to find out some ways of reconciling his religion with his vices; suppose such a one has the Gospel preach'd to him by an Apostle, and confirmed by signs and wonders, there is no reason to conclude that he will receive it, that he will submit to a religion which is attended with many temporal inconveniences, and which upon all accounts he despises and hates, that he will alter his whole course of life, and become a poor and persecuted disciple of Christ, and enter into his Church.

I know, it may be said that amongst the first Christians there were* several who had led bad lives before; but there are many degrees

* Ἡμεῖς δὲ, says Origen, εἴ τις κατανόησαι ἡμῶν εὐγνωμόνως τὸ ἀθροισμα, πλείονας ἔχομεν παραστήσαι τὸς ἐκ ἀπὸ χαλεπῆ πάνυ εἰς ἥπερ τὸς ἀπὸ ἐξωλεσθίων ἀμαρτημάτων ἐπιστρέψαντας. καὶ γὰρ πεφύκασιν οἱ τὰ κρείττονα εαυτοῖς συνεγνωκότες, εὐχόμενοι ἀληθῆ εἶναι τὰ κηρυσσόμενα περὶ τοῦ ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῖς κρείττοσιν ἀμοιβῆς, ἐλοιμύτερον συγκαταλίδεσθαι τοῖς λεγομένοις, παρὰ τὸς πάνυ μοχθηροῦς βεβιωκότας.——If any one will candidly consider us Christians, we can produce him more who have been converted from a life not the worst, than from a very wicked course.

degrees in wickedness, and there is no reason to suppose that these sinners were for the most part of the worst sort ; and though some persons who have been very wicked may become very good, and such were found amongst the first Christians, yet where the exceptions are few, the general observation is not affected by them ; for thus much is certain, that an honest mind is a great help to understand the truth, that the practice of Morality leads to the practice of Christianity, and that, since conversion is brought about by steps, and revealed religion is founded on natural religion, he who is moved to embrace the Gospel must be first sensible of the difference between good and evil, truth and falsehood, virtue and vice, must love the one and abhor the other, must repent of his former transgressions and receive the sacred knowledge, which is offered to him, with gratitude and a firm resolution of performing his duty, He therefore who can call evil good, and

For they, whose conscience speaks favourably in their behalf, are disposed to wish that our doctrine concerning the future rewards of goodness may be true ; and so are more ready to assent to the Gospel than profligate men. Contr. Cels. iii. p. 150.

good

good evil, who is totally corrupted in heart and understanding, is removed at an infinite distance from God and righteousness, has no ears to hear, and no eyes to see, not even to see miracles, so as to be instructed and amended by them.

To this general cause the unbelief of the *Jews* may be ascribed, as also to several prejudices which they had against the person of Christ, and the doctrines of the Gospel.

The *Jews* were offended at Christ, because he was not received and followed by those of the most learning and authority amongst them. *Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on him?*

We may then suppose that a *Jew* who rejected the Gospel would have argued thus: It becomes a private man not to lean too much to his own understanding, but to suppose that they who have studied the laws of God more than himself, and are appointed of God to be his instructors, are better judges in religious controversies than he can possibly be. Our spiritual guides are all of opinion that Jesus is not the Messiah. It is therefore the most modest, rational, and safe way for me, who have not their

leisure, learning and abilities, to submit and trust to their decisions.

Here is a prejudice founded upon the doctrine that private persons, especially they who are ignorant and illiterate, should follow the judgment of the Church, of their guides and teachers. This doctrine has something plausible in it, and under certain limitations and restrictions may be admitted.

The vulgar ought indeed to pay a great regard to their teachers, and are often under a necessity of admitting many things upon their authority; but then we must except things plain* in their own nature, in a word, every thing in which the reason of one man is as good a judge as the reason of another, in which a man knows that he wants no guide, and therefore should submit to none,

This is the case before us. Every *Jew* in *Jerusalem* was as competent a judge of a miracle as the high priest, and if he saw Christ raise a man from the dead, and perform a variety of wonderful works, might

* See Whitby *Serm. on Joh. viii. 37. in his Comment.*
vol. i.

conclude with full assurance, and without any danger of mistaking, that God would never suffer a deceiver to do such works in his name, who taught nothing contrary to common sense.

In such a case as this, a *Jew* who submitted to the authority of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, of the chief priests and rulers, against plain evidence, absolutely renounced all use of reason, after which it would have been ridiculous in him to talk of the reasonableness of following his guides, the reasonableness of rejecting private judgment; for what had such a one to do with reason?

The *Jews* were offended at Christ, because he was not a temporal prince and a conqueror. They were all persuaded that the *Messias* should be a great king, under whom they should rule over the *Gentiles*, and live in wealth and pleasure.

When therefore they found that Christ was poor and despised, and died an ignominious death, and that his kingdom, as his Apostles taught, was a spiritual kingdom established in the hearts of men, a kingdom not of this world, the cross of
Christ

Christ proved a stumbling-block to them, and they were displeased with a doctrine that suited neither with their prejudices nor with their inclinations.

They had indeed several arguments to offer in behalf of this prejudice, which, though they are weak if they be compared with the superior evidences of the truth of the Gospel, yet have a plausible appearance when they are considered by themselves, and therefore deserve to be answered.

1. In the first place, as their Law contained several promises to the obedient, and those promises were temporal, it was not to be thought strange that the *Jews* should have accounted prosperity a mark of God's favour, and adversity of his displeasure. This laid a foundation for a prejudice against Christ and his Apostles.

2. Almost all the great and good men recorded in the Scriptures, whom God had raised up from time to time to be their princes and leaders, were miraculously blessed with success in their undertakings. The *Jews* therefore expected that the *Messias*, when he appeared, should surpass *Moses* and *Joshua*, and *David*, and the *Maccabees*,

Maccabees, and other of their victorious kings and leaders, they expected that he should as much surpass them in splendor and felicity, as in dignity and authority.

3. To confirm them in this expectation, there were several prophecies applied by all the *Jews* to the *Messias*, which represent him as a powerful prince, who should save and protect his people and overcome his enemies, and which speak in magnificent terms of the peace and prosperity of his happy reign.

But it is easy to shew that these objections against our Saviour were not sufficient to excuse their unbelief.

For, though the Law promised temporal blessings to the good, yet the *Jews* knew by long experience that those promises had not been fulfilled at all times, and to all persons. Extraordinary interpositions in behalf of the righteous were grown less frequent, and proportionably to this decrease the intimations of a future state had been more numerous and evident. The *Jews* therefore had no reason to judge of the characters and merits of men by their station and circumstances in this life, or to
 imagine

imagine that *fortunate* and *virtuous* were the same thing.

They might have found examples of good men who had undergone much trouble, and had received here below no reward of their obedience.

They might have learned from the Prophets that the *Messias*, to whom so much power and prosperity and splendor was promised, was also to be a man* of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and that his soul was to be an offering for sin; and they might have seen, in the sufferings of Christ, and in his resurrection, the accomplishment of these seemingly irreconcilable predictions.

Lastly; if some particular prophecies concerning the reign of the *Messias* appeared to them unfulfilled, they ought not upon that account to have rejected Christ: They should have rested satisfied with the various proofs which he gave them of his divine power, and have concluded, either that they did not understand the true sense of

* Some of them seem to have known and believed it.
See *Whitby* on *Ephes.* i. 4.

those prophecies, or that the time of their completion was not yet come.

They were offended at him, because, as they said, he profaned the sabbath-day, that is, did not observe it according to their superstitious manner.

But Christ, as the great Prophet, and a worker of miracles, according to the example of other prophets, and according to the decisions of the *Jews* themselves, had a power of setting aside the ceremonial rest of the Sabbath, or any other ritual law. Thus *Joshua* commanded that the ark of God should be carried round *Jericho*, the armed men going before and after it, seven days together, one of which must have been a Sabbath; thus *Elijah* and *Elisba* touched and handled dead bodies, to restore them to life, and did not account themselves legally unclean; thus *Samuel* and *Elijah* offered sacrifices, though neither of them were priests, and in places where, as some think, sacrifices could not be offered according to the law. In a word, it * appears

* See *Le Clerc* on 1 *Sam.* vii. 17. *Grotius* on *Luke* vii. 14. It is certain that the Sabbatic years and the Jubilees were greatly neglected by the *Jews*, as probably were many other

pears that many ceremonial laws were at certain times generally difused, and unobserved by very good men.

They were offended, some of them at least, because he did not live in a way more austere, and in their opinion more becoming the dignity which he assumed, because he condescended to converse with people of bad reputation, with Publicans and sinners.

Some were offended at him, because, said they,* we know whence he is, but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

Some were offended, because he was not of *Bethlehem*, where it was foretold that the Messias should be born. A little enquiry would have set them right, if they had taken any pains to find out the truth.

They were offended at him, because he had dwelt in *Galilee*, out of which place

other ceremonial laws. Yet we learn from *Josephus* i. p. 657, and 741. *Ed. Haverc.* that in the Days of *Herod the Great*, and some time at least, before, the Sabbatic years were observed. See *Prideaux* in the *Pref.* to his *Connect.* who has not taken notice of this.

* See the *Comment.* on *Job.* vii. 27.

no prophet could ever arise, as they foolishly supposed.

Christ had dwelt at *Nazareth* till he entered into his office; his relations dwelt there; the inhabitants of that place were acquainted with his person, and remembered his education; they knew that he had no opportunity of acquiring the learning which could qualify him to be a teacher. When they heard the force and the wisdom with which he spake, and were informed of his mighty works, and saw some of them, they were astonished, and yet they could not pay him a due respect; they * slighted him, because they knew him, and the poverty of his family, and the obscurity in which he had lived amongst them, and having long view'd him as their equal, they could not submit to shew him the veneration due to a prophet. It is very likely that some envy was mixed with their prejudice. *Whence*, said

* So the *Agyptians* at first despised their king *Amasis*, on account of his extraction and former condition; ἡ μὲν δὴ πρῶτα καλῶντο τὸν Ἀμασιν Αἰγύπτιος, καὶ ἐν ἐδεμὶν μόισῃ μεγάλῃ ἦγον, ἄλλε δὴ δημόσιον τοπεῖν ἐόντα, καὶ οὐκ ἔκ ἐπιφανέος. *Herodot.* ii. 172. p. 155.

they,

they, *both this man this wisdom, and these mighty works* ? Whence could he have his power of working miracles unless from God ? and whence could he have his wisdom, unless from him also ? They, of all people, should have been the readiest to believe in him, because knowing well that he had been deprived of the ordinary means of receiving instruction, and of acquiring the knowledge which appeared in all that he spake, they had a clear evidence that it must have been a supernatural gift.

They were offended at him, because in his discourses to them he sometimes gave them hints that he was a much greater person than they imagined, upon which they called him a blasphemer, who made himself God, and equal with God, that is, who assumed to himself divine honours and more respect than was due to a prophet ; for the *Jews* * had no notion that their *Messias* should be any thing more than mere man.

The *Jews*, as appears from *Justin's Dialogue with Trypho*, objected to the Christians, that they worshipped more Gods than

* See *Whitb. on Rom. ix. 5.*

one, and ascribed divine perfections to Christ.

To this * *Justin*, and other Christians, answered, - that frequent mention is made in the Old Testament of a person, who is † called God, and is God, and yet is distinguished from the God and Father of all.

Besides ; ‡ *Philo*, and several of their own writers taught something so like the Christian doctrine concerning the Son and the Spirit of God, that the *Jews*, if they condemned the Gospel upon that account, condemned themselves.

We read in the Scriptures that God is no object of our senses, that he has no body or form, that he is the invisible God, whom no man hath seen or can see. And in many of the manifestations which God made of himself, nothing appeared, except a glorious light, a cloud and fire, or else only a voice was heard. But in other places it is said that God himself appeared. To re-

* See the Index to *Thirlby's Justin, Christus*.

† Θεὸς καλεῖται, καὶ Θεὸς ἐστὶ καὶ ἔσται. *Justin*. p. 261.

‡ See *Grotius de Ver.* R. C. v. 21. *Vitringa* on *Isai.* vol. ii. p. 458. not. *Le Clerc* on *Job.* i. *Fabric. de Ver.* R. C. p. 132.

concile which, the ancient Christian writers generally agree, and their consent ought not to be slighted, that the * person who appeared at different times to *Adam*, to *Abraham*, to *Moses*, to the elders of *Israel*, to the Patriarchs and Prophets, and to other good men, who would not tell his name to *Jacob* and to *Manoah*, when they asked him who he was, who is called both God and the Angel of God, that this person was the Word of God, the Son of God, who was in the form of God, who was the visible image of the invisible God, representing the majesty of his Father, and acting in his name.

* See *Bull*, *Defens. Fid. Nic.* *Clarke* Repl. to *Nels.* p. 161. and *Serm.* 5. vol. 1. *Whitby* on *Job.* i. 1 *Cor.* x. 9. *Philipp.* ii. 6. *Coloss.* i. 15. *Vitringa* on *Isai.* lxiii. 9, 10. p. 249. and on *Zech.* i. 11, 12, p. 131. concerning the Angel who intercedes with God for the *Jews*.

Some think that where the Angel of the Lord is mentioned, no other is meant than one of those ministering spirits, who sometimes represented the person of God, acted in his stead and spake in his name; and then, say they, whatever honour and adoration might be seemingly paid to him, was really paid to God, to whom it was designed, and whom the Angel personated. See *Le Clerc* in *Indice ad Pentat.* ANGELUS. And the Commentators on *Heb.* ii. 2, and 5.

The

The Angel who appeared to * *Manoah*, (*Judg.* xiii. 18.) said to him, *Why askest thou after my name, seeing it is secret, or wonderful?* If we compare this with *Isaiab* ix. 6. it is there said of the Messiah, *his name shall be called, Wonderful.* If we compare it with *Revel.* xix. 12. it is there said of Christ, *He had a name written which none knew but he himself.*

Concerning this Angel † *Isaiab* thus speaks, celebrating God's loving-kindness to the children of *Israel* in ancient times: *The Angel of God's presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old.*

These great things are here ascribed to the Angel of God's presence, or, of his face; which if we compare with the history of those transactions, as related by *Moses*, we find that God Almighty manifested himself to *Moses* by an Angel. *The Angel of the Lord appeared to him in the bush, and said, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;*

* See *Vitringa* on *Isai.* ix. 5, 6.

† lxiii. 9. Where see *Vitringa*.

and afterwards, *I am that I am, I am the Lord Jehovah.* We find that this Angel went before his people in a cloud: and afterwards, representing the person of almighty God, and speaking in his name, he says, *Behold, I send my Angel before thee---beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not: for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him.*

Concerning this Angel *Jacob* thus speaks, when he blesses the children of *Joseph*: *The God who fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.* And *Moses* blessing the posterity of *Joseph*, prays that they may enjoy the favour of him, of the Angel, who dwelt in the bush.

Concerning this Angel *Zechariah* thus speaks, xii. 8. *In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the House of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the Lord before them.* The sentence rises in such a manner, that it cannot be supposed to sink at last; whence it is reasonable to conclude that the
same

same person is here called God, and the Angel of the Lord.

Lastly, Concerning the same Angel *Malachi* says, *The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Angel, or messenger, of the covenant.*

This mighty Angel, the saviour, redeemer, intercessor, and protector, seems to be no common or created Angel, but that Angel in whom the name of God was, and by whom God speaks to mankind, and who on that account is called the Word of God, who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, by whom all things were created, and who afterwards became man and dwelt with us.

The *Jews* had many prejudices against the person of Christ; they had as many, or rather more, against his doctrine.

The religion of the Gospel is spiritual: the religion of the *Jews*, as they made it, was carnal. The Gospel places morality above rites and ceremonies: the *Jews* preferred, in their practice at least, the ritual law to the moral.

The Gospel represents the law of ceremonies as a temporary institution, which

drew towards its end after the coming of *John the Baptist*: the *Jews* thought that the whole Law was everlasting, and of perpetual obligation. They believed that they could perform as much of it as would be sufficient to secure the favour of God; they therefore rejected new doctrines and means of salvation as false, or useless and unnecessary.

Of all their mistakes and prejudices, their too great zeal for the Law seems to have been the most excusable. It arose partly from a high veneration for commandments, which were undoubtedly of divine appointment, and a good man might have fallen into it. Therefore the Apostles used great lenity and condescension towards the *Jews* in this particular, and suffered them to observe the ritual law along with the Gospel, which they did for a considerable time, till, *Jerusalem* being destroyed, no small part of the ceremonial law became impracticable, and by slow * degrees the whole fell into disuse,

* *Sulpitius Severus* L. ii. *Eusebius* E. H. iv. 6. *Origen* contr *Cels*, ii. p. 56.

The *Jews* accounted *Moses* to have been the greatest of all the prophets: the Gospel taught them that *John the Baptist* was a prophet greater than all who had been before him, yet in every respect infinitely inferior to Christ, and not equal to the least of Christ's disciples in dignity of office.

The *Jews* not only avoided, as much as they could, all intercourse with the *Gentiles*, which indeed their own Law required of them in many cases, but had them generally in abomination, not for their vices, but because they observed not the law of *Moses*: the Gospel commanded them to love all men, though they were not *Jews* either by birth or by religion, and not to shun them as unfit for conversation, unless they were scandalous by impiety or immorality.

The Gospel condemned, not only evil actions, but evil inclinations and thoughts: the **Jews*, if we may judge of them by the sentiments

* *Josephus* says that *Antiochus Epiphanes*, as he was dying, confessed that he suffered for the injuries which he had done to the *Jews*. Then he adds, I wonder how *Polybius* could say that *Antiochus* perished, because he had purposed

sentiments of some of their own writers, were of opinion that there was no harm in bad designs, unless they were put in execution.

The

to plunder the temple of *Diana* in *Perſia* ; for to intend the thing only, and not to perform it, is not worthy of puniſhment : ὥς τε θαυμάζειν Πολύβιον τὸν Μεγαλοπολίτην, ὅς, ἀγαθὸς ὢν ἀνὴρ, ἀποθανεῖν λέγει τὸν Ἀγρίοχον, ἐκλιθένηα τὸ τῆς ἐν Πέρσαις Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερὸν συλῆσαι. τὸ γὰρ μνηεῖται σφῆσαι τὸ ἔργον ἐκλευσάμενον, ἐκ ἐστὶ τριμωρίας ἀξίων. — Ant. xii. 9.

See *Selden* de *Synedr.* ii. 13. §. 7. *Hammond* on *Rom.* vii. 7. *Grævius* on *Cicero* de *Offic.* i. 4. and *Grotius* on *Exod.* xx. 17. who observes that the wiser Pagans had much better notions. The story of *Glaucus* is remarkable, who being esteemed a man of singular probity, and having a large sum of money deposited in his hands, and an opportunity of keeping it from the owners, if he would forswear himself, consulted the Oracle at *Delphi* what he should do ; ἐπειρωτῶντα δὲ αὐτὸν τὸ χρηστήριον εἰ ὄρκω τὰ χρήματα ληΐσεται, ἢ Πυθίην μεΐερχεται τοῖσδε τοῖσι ἔπεσι.

Γλαῦκ' Ἐπικυδεῖδ' ἦ, τὸ μὲν αὐτίκα κέρδιον ἔτο,

Ὅρκῳ νικήσαι, καὶ χρήματα ληΐσασθαι.

Ὅμνυ' ἐπεὶ θάνατός γε καὶ εὐορκὸν μένει ἄνδρα.

Ἄλλ' ὄρκῳ πάϊς ἐστὶν ἀνώνυμος, ἔδ' ἐπὶ χεῖρες,

οὐδὲ πόδες· κραιπνὸς δὲ μεΐερχεται, εἰσόκε πᾶσαν

Συμμεφάσας ὀλέσῃ γενεήν, καὶ οἶκον ἅπαντα.

Ἄνδρὸς δ' εὐόρκῳ γενεὴ μελόπιθεν ἀμείνων.

Ταῦτα ἀκῆσας ὁ Γλαῦκος συγγνώμην τὸν Θεὸν παρεκτείνετο αὐτῷ ἵχεν τῶν ῥηθέντων· ἡ δὲ Πυθίη ἔφη, τὸ περιθῆναι τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ τὸ ποιῆσαι, ἴσον δύναιται. Γλαῦκος μὲν δὴ μετὰ πεμφάμενος τὴς Μιλησίου ξείνης, ἀποδιδόσκει τὰ χρήματα, — Γλαῦκε νῦν ἔτετι ἀπόγονόν ἐστι υἱόν, ὅτ' ἐστὶν ἐδεμίν

The Gospel required purity of heart : the Jews had slight notions of this duty, and placed purity in bodily and ritual purifications.

The

ἡδεμὶν νομιζομένη εἶναι Γλαύκῃ ἐκτέλειπαι ἢ περὶ ῥίζος ἐκ Σπάρτης.

When he had proposed his question, the Priestesses of Apollo answered thus :

If present profit claim thy chief regard,
Be bold, and swear, and take the obvious prize.
Just dealing cannot save thee from the grave.
But the oath's Guardian has a nameless Son,
Who swift and strong, though without hand or foot,
Pursues, o'ertakes, and seizes, and destroys
The whole devoted race ; whilst honest men
Leave lasting blessings to their children's children.

Glaucus bearing this, intreated the god to forgive him what he had said. The Priestesses reply'd ; To tempt the god, and to commit the action, is all one. Glaucus however sent to recall his Milesian guests, and deliver'd them the money.— At present there remains no house or progeny of Glaucus, but it is rooted out from Sparta. Herodot. vi. p. 359. Ed. Gron. See the same story related by Juvenal xiii. 199.

Compare the words of the Oracle, concerning the Son of the Deity who presides over oaths, with Zechar. v. 1.— *I looked, and behold, a flying roll.— Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth,—and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name : and it shall remain in the midst of his house ; and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof.* The likeness between these two places is observed by Grotius.

The

The Gospel promised eternal happiness to those who would lead religious lives, and to impenitent sinners denounced the most dreadful punishments: the *Jews* thought that no *Israelite* should be deprived of future happiness, whatsoever his faults had been,* unless he were guilty of apostacy, idolatry,

The last verse of the Oracle is to be found in *Hesiod* 'Erg. 285. and the sense, tho' not the words, of the foregoing lines, 282, &c.

Maimonides indeed, and some others, learn'd to talk in a better manner on this subject, and more conformably to Christian morality. See *Huet*. *Alnet*. Quæst. p. 343.

* Ὑπολαμβάνοντες ὅτι πάντως τοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς σπορῆς τῆς κατὰ σάρκα τῆς Ἀβραάμ ᾗσι, καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ᾗσι καὶ ἄπιστοι καὶ ἀπειθεῖς πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, ἡ βασιλεία ἡ αἰώνιος δοθήσεται. *existimantes eis omnino qui ex saty, secundum carnem, Abrahami sunt, quamvis peccatoribus, et infidelibus, et erga Deum immorigeris, regnum æternum datum iri.* Justin M. Dial. p. 433. Ed. Thirl.

The School of *Elias* used to say, that *whosoever learned the Traditions of the Misnah might be assured he should have eternal life.* See *Grotius* on *Mat.* x. 28. xiv. 2. *James* ii. 14. *Whitb.* on *Acts* i. 25. *Rom.* ii. 13. *James* ii. 11. and p. 466, 467. vol. 2. of 6th Edit.

Perhaps they did not carry this notion so far as to affirm that their wicked country-men should receive no correction in a future state, but probably they thought that God, who in their opinion was a respecter of persons, would be gracious to these unworthy children of *Abraham*, that their punishment should last a certain time, and that then they should

idolatry, and a few other crimes which they specified.

The Gospel gave the *Jews* no hopes that they should subdue their enemies, and become a free and independent nation: the *Jews* were very * factious and seditious, and had an intemperate love of liberty, at a time

should enter into a state of happiness, which favour should not be extended to the *Gentiles*, for whom God had no regard. See *Le Clerc. Quæst. Hieron. p. 287. Whitb. on Acts xi. 18. xv. 1. Rom. ii. 13. 1 Cor. i. 28. 2 Cor. xi. 20 Huet. Alnet. Quæst. p. 297. Windet. de Vitâ funct. statu. p. 70. 4to. Ed. Sale's notes on the Coran. p. 11.*

Many *Mohammedan* doctors are much in the same way of thinking, and teach that believers shall all enter into a state of happiness after the resurrection, some immediately, others after certain punishments, but that infidels shall be consigned over to eternal misery. See *Reland. de Relig. Mohammed. and Sale's Coran, prelim. disc. p. 92.*

* Their turbulent temper may be known from the *Jus Zelotarum*, or privilege, under the pretence of zeal, to dispatch an offender without the tedious formality of a trial; concerning which licentiousness *Philo* says, injudiciously enough, *De Monarch. I. p. 818. Ed. Paris 1640. Καὶ ἐπιτελέσθαι δὲ καλὸν ᾧ πᾶσι τοῖς ζῆλον ἔχουσιν ἀρεῖης, ἐκ χειρὸς ἀπαρεχθῆναι ἀνυπερθέτως τὰς τιμωρίας, μὴτ' εἰς δικαστήριον, μὴτ' εἰς βουλευτήριον, μὴτε συνόλως ἐπ' ἀρχὴν ἄγοντας, ἀλλὰ τῷ παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ μισοπονήρῳ πάθει καὶ φιλοθῆναι κατὰ χρῆναι πρὸς τὰς τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀπαρχαίητες κολάσεις, νομίσαντας αὐτοὺς ὑπὸ τῆς καὶ τὰ πάντα γεγενῆσθαι, βουλευτῶν, δικαστῶν, στρατηγῶν, ἐκκλησιαστῶν, καὶ ἡγεμόνων, μάστιγας,*

a time and in circumstances when it was not to be obtained.

The Gospel called the *Jews* to sufferings and persecution, and had at that time a very unpromising aspect as to this world. A converted *Jew* could expect nothing besides ill usage from his country-men, who

μάστιγας, νόμους, δῆμον, ἵνα μηδεὶς ὄντος ἐμποδὼν, ἄφοροι συνόδῳ πολλῇ προαγωνίζωνται ὁσιότητος.

This also is right, that all who have a zeal for virtue are allowed to execute rigorous punishment without delay, neither carrying the offender to the courts of judicature, nor to any magistræ, but indulging that ardour which the hatred of iniquity and the love of God excites, to the end that the impious may never escape vengeance, and accounting themselves, by the exigence of the time, to be made all things, senators, judges, generals, assemblies, accusers, witnesses, laws and people, that so nothing may hinder them from exerting themselves boldly and jointly for righteousness.

The love of God and of virtue and of truth is no such turbulent and boisterous passion, and pious zeal may be active and yet not pernicious, and shine without burning. Intemperate Zeal is like *Sirius* in *Homer* :

Λαμπρότατος μὲν ὄγ' ἐστὶ, κακὸν δέ τε σῆμα γέφυκται,
καὶ τε φέρεται πολλὸν πυρρὸν δειλοῖσι βεβροῖσι.

IL. x. 30.

*Ille quidem clarâ, sed sævâ luce coruscat,
Et morbos æstusque adfert mortalibus ægris.*

Pious Zeal is like the gentle *Flame* in *Virgil* :

*Ecce levis subito de vertice visus Iuli
Fundere lumen apex, tactuque innoxia mollis
Lambere flamma comas, et circum tempora pasci.*

Æn. ii.

were

were very zealous for their religion ; and if he were the only one of his family who received Christianity, he might be sure that his worst enemies would be his nearest relations, and his most inveterate foes those of his own household. It required no small virtue and resolution to offer up such a sacrifice to God, to forsake house and land, friends and kindred, father and mother, wife and children, for the sake of Christ.

The *Jews* were accustomed to * indulge themselves without restraint in those things which the Law allowed for the hardness of their hearts : here the Gospel interposed with strict prohibitions, representing the custom of divorce and of marrying again, as it was practised by them, as no better than adultery. The Apostles themselves thought this, when they first heard it, to be a hard precept ; and indeed, † in all parts of the world where these practises have been established, nothing has stopped the progress of Christianity more than the

* See *Whitby* on *John* viii. 7.

† See *Bayle* Dict. MAHOMET GALADIN. & *Parrhasiana*, ch. 7.

prohibition

prohibition of * polygamy and divorce, and many, who else seemed disposed to receive the Gospel, have rejected it upon this only account.

Lastly, the *Jews* thought that the Christian † morality was in general too strict and severe, and that no man could possibly practise it.

The chief priests, Scribes and Pharisees, besides all these prejudices already mentioned, had particular motives to reject the Gospel.

They hated Christ, because he had re-proved and openly exposed their pride, their hypocrisy, their uncharitableness, their

* Christ and the Apostles have not perhaps directly, and in so many words, prohibited polygamy ; but from the reasoning of Christ against divorce, Christians have justly concluded polygamy to be unlawful. Of the evils arising from both, see *Le Clerc Hist. Eccles. Proleg.* p. 113. 161.

† Trypho says to Justin, ὁμῶν δὲ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ λεγομένῳ εὐαγγελίῳ παρεγγέλματα θαυμαστὰ ἕως καὶ μέγала ἐπίσταμαι εἶναι, ὥς ὑπολαμβάνειν μηδένα δύνασθαι φυλάξαι αὐτά. *Vestra sane quæ in evangelio, quod dicitur, sunt præcepta tam magna et admiranda esse novimus, ut suspicio nostra sit a nemine ea servari posse.*

So also says *Orobios* in his dispute with *Limborch*.

See *Tillotson* Vol. 1. Serm. 28. The *Jews* taught that a careful observance of some laws would excuse the violation of the rest. See *Whitby* on *James* ii. 11.

covetousness,

covetousness, their zeal for traditions ; and their hatred against him disposed them to think ill of him, and to do him all ill offices. We need not wonder when we find them upon all occasions opposing and calumniating him, if we consider that they were a wicked set of men, and that he had publicly and frequently reprov'd them. They were highly incens'd against him, and in the judgment which they made of him, they were directed by their passions, not by their reason.

Nor did anger and resentment only furnish them with prejudices against Christ, but self-interest also and worldly policy. The people, who had seen the miracles of Christ, particularly that miracle by which he had fed a great multitude, had at one time, as St. *John* relates, a design to make him their king, concluding reasonably enough that under such a leader they should be victorious. Therefore Christ, if he had been a deceiver, and had entertained ambitious designs, might easily have made himself a prince, and might have incited the people to shake off the *Roman* yoke, which was grievous to them.

The

The chief priests and principal persons amongst the *Jews* thought, that if Christ should make such an attempt they should be ruined, whatsoever the consequence of it were. If the *Jews* under his conduct should endeavour to recover their liberties, and fail in it, they knew that the nation would be severely punished by the *Romans*. Nor was their prospect less bad, if Christ should deliver the people from their subjection to a foreign power, and rule over them himself; for though they hated the *Romans*, yet doubtless they thought that Christ would be a worse ruler for them than any *Roman* governor. They knew that he had a bad opinion of them, and that he had exposed their vices, and therefore they concluded that the establishment of his authority would be the ruin of theirs. Thus were they incited not only by resentment, but, as they fancied, by interest, to deny that Christ was the *Messias*, to oppose him, and to destroy him; for, since they were persuaded that the *Messias* should be a temporal king, they could not acknowledge Christ to be the *Messias*, unless at the
same

same time they owned him to be their king.

They succeeded in their endeavours, they stirred up the people, they intimidated the governor, they prevailed to have Christ crucified, and by his death they thought themselves at last secure from all these evils. But he arose again, and his disciples appeared openly in *Jerusalem*, working miracles, and teaching that Jesus was the *Messias*. One would at first think that no man could withstand such evidence; but we shall not so much wonder at their obstinacy, if we observe that their fears, and, as they thought, their interests led them again to oppose the truth.

They considered that they were the persons who had represented Christ as a madman, an impostor, a magician, a violator of the law, who had instigated the people and who had persuaded *Pilate* to crucify him; they heard that the Apostles wrought miracles in the name of Christ, and they concluded that if the Apostles were permitted to proceed in this manner, they would convert a great part of the *Jews*, and they feared that if the doctrines taught by

D

Christ's

Christ's disciples should be received, they who had been his implacable enemies, should be accounted not only ignorant and blind guides, but dishonest men, that they should not only lose their credit and authority, but be exposed to the resentment of the incensed multitude; and therefore they thought that the best way to secure themselves was to deter and hinder the Apostles from appearing any more in public, and from preaching the Gospel. And when the disciples continued to perform the functions of their ministry, the high priest asked them, saying, *Did we not straightly command you that you should not teach in this name? And behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.*

Miracles were wrought to convince them; but when a man is violently bent to believe or disbelieve, he is more than half persuaded that things are as he desires. They hastily concluded that those miracles were either delusions and impostures, or wonderful works performed by the aid of evil spirits.

From

From these ill dispositions proceeded suitable effects; for they persecuted the first Christians, they accused them to the Roman magistrates of sedition, they beat them in their synagogues, they imprisoned them, they banished them, they put many of them to death, and strove to the utmost of their power to destroy this rising sect. Some * ancient writers assure us, that the *Jews* took the pains to send persons from *Jerusalem* into all countries, to accuse the Christians of atheism and other crimes, and to make them as odious as they possibly could.

From the account which we have given of the obstinacy of the *Jews*, and of the causes whence it arose, it appears that their unbelief is no objection to the truth of the Gospel. The modern *Jews* therefore reason weakly when they say, that their ancestors would not, and could not have rejected Christ, if the miracles related in the Gospel had been really wrought. Against this argument we may also observe, that it can do no service to a *Jew*, because it would prove

* *Justin M.* and *Eusebius*. See *Justin* p. 171. and *Thirlby's* Notes, and *Fabricius* de Ver. R. C. p. 665.

too much. It would prove that *Moses* wrought no miracles, since the whole people of *Israel* often rebelled against him: it would prove that many of the prophets recorded in the Old Testament were false prophets, because they were persecuted by the *Jews*. The *Jews* are not able to give any reason * why they acknowledge the Law of *Moses* to be a divine revelation, which will not directly and more strongly establish the truth and authority of the Gospel.

The GENTILES had many prejudices in common with the *Jews*, and some peculiar to themselves.

The causes of unbelief which were common to them with the *Jews* were, a great

* This argument is used by *Origen* contr. Cels. I. p. 32. and frequently through the whole treatise. *Orobias*, being press'd with it by *Limborch*, was forced to make two awkward concessions; first, that a *Jew* could not prove his religion to a Deist; and secondly, that it became every Christian and *Jew* to continue in the religion in which he had been educated, because each had arguments to urge which the other could not confute. See *Limborch's* Collat. & Le Clerc Bibl. Choif. xxiv. p. 359. The heretic *Apelles* said much the same thing, namely, *μη δ᾽ ἂν ὅλως ἐξείλξειν τὸν λόγον, ἀλλ' ἕκαστον ὡς πεπίστευκε διαμένειν* Eusebius E. H. v. 13.

corruption of manners, the prejudice of education, the purity of the precepts of the Gospel so opposite to their vitious inclinations, the temporal inconveniences which attended the profession of Christianity, and the temporal advantages which might be secured or obtained by rejecting or opposing it, the poor appearance which Christ had made in the world, and his ignominious death, which they could not reconcile with the divine power ascribed to him by his disciples ; these things produced in the greater part of the *Jews* an aversion to the Gospel, and they had the same effect on the unconverted *Gentiles*.

The *Gentiles* ought not to have slighted and rejected the Gospel upon account of the low estate and sufferings of Christ and his Apostles. Their own reason, and some of their most approved writers might have taught them not to value persons according to their greatness and riches, nor to measure the favour of God by temporal happiness, but to love and honour oppress'd innocence.

They might have remembered that the best man and the wisest philosopher recorded

ed in their histories, lived all his days in
* poverty, was exposed to slander and calumny, and at last was accused by false witnesses, and condemned to die by unjust judges.

They knew that Virtue often obtains not the esteem and respect which it deserves, that it often lies concealed from the world, or, being placed in view, is yet not observed, and that posterity frequently does justice to the characters † of illustrious persons whose good qualities have been overlooked by those amongst whom they dwelt.

They knew that Virtue, though it be so amiable in itself, has a lustre offensive to the vicious, that therefore Pride, and Ignorance, and Envy, and Malice, and Cenforiousness will join to obscure and misrepresent it, will en-

* ἐγὼ μὲν οἶμαι, ἔφη ὁ Σωκράτης, εἰ ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ ἐπιτύχοιμι, εὐπεὶς ἂν μοι σὺν τῇ οἰκίᾳ καὶ τᾷ ὄντι πάντα πάντα παρὶς πέντε μνᾶς. *I believe, said Socrates, that, if I should meet with a good purchaser, my effects, house and all would easily fetch me sixteen pounds.* Xenoph. Oeconom. I. 3.

Socrates, amicis audientibus: Emissum, inquit, pallium, si nummos haberem, &c. Seneca de Benef. VII. 24.

In Plato's *Apol. Socrat.* he says that he is in extreme poverty, ἐν πενίᾳ βυεῖα εἶμι.

† *Quamdiu Catonem civitas ignoravit? respuit, nec intellexit, nisi cum perdidit. Seneca.*

deavour

deavour to make it contemptible, and to bring it to a level with themselves.

They knew that he best deserved the name of a wise and good man who lived up to the rules of morality which he had prescribed to others; and they ought to have admired a man who at the same time that he recommended to his followers humility, patience and resignation to the will of God under the severest trials, forgiveness of injuries, and universal love and charity, practised these duties himself in their full extent, and was a perfect example of all that he taught.

The *Gentiles* could not conceive how one who seemed hated and forsaken of God should restore men to the favour of God, and how his sufferings could be serviceable to that end.

• It is reasonable that the Divine mercy should constantly display itself in all cases which lie within the reach of compassion. Such was the case of us men, who though sinful, yet are weak and frail beings, though offenders, yet corrigible and capable of amendment.

But it is also reasonable that God should be displeased at the rebellion and transgressi-

ons of his creatures, that he should shew his disapprobation of iniquity, and so grant his pardon, as at the same time to vindicate the honour of his government and of his laws. Now this he has accomplished in a most illustrious manner in the death of his Son, thereby shewing his hatred to sin in keeping sinners at a distance, and refusing to hear them in their own name, and in bestowing his favours only through the mediation of one, who *suffered for their offences, and rose again for their justification.*

It is farther reasonable that even this Intercessor should not interpose in our behalf, if we prefer vice to virtue, and therefore the Gospel has taught us that Christ's death shall be no attonement for us, nor his resurrection of any benefit to us, unless we use our best endeavours to die to sin and to live to God.

An example of goodness set before us for our imitation, encouragement to practise the virtues which are most conspicuous in adversity, which at the same time adorn it and soften its harsh nature, reliance upon him who underwent so much for our sake, hope that he will be a merciful judge, motives from gratitude to love him more than our
sins

sins who loved us more than his own life, the fears of departing hence considerably assuaged, these are benefits arising from the sufferings of our Master, and useful purposes which seem to be better answered by this method of our redemption, than they would have been if Christ had descended from heaven to proclaim forgiveness of sins upon repentance, and to teach men their duty, and then had left the world without undergoing the evils to which he submitted.

The *Gentiles* thought it strange to ascribe such power and authority to a crucified man.

But, the greatest power which any person can shew, consists unquestionably in performing things which no other can do, unless God assist him in an extraordinary manner. To destroy the peace of mankind, and carry ruin and desolation through populous countries, is no more than what human strength and human policy can accomplish. Many have done this who have not possess'd one commendable quality. To be honoured, admired, trusted, revered, and beloved, these are advantages which may be obtained without any supernatural aid. But, as the *Psalmist* observes, no man by the multi-

multitude of his riches, or the eminence of his station, can deliver his brother, or himself from death, or make agreement unto God for him. For it cost more to redeem their souls, so that he must let that alone for ever. Therefore he who can heal all sicknesses and diseases by speaking a word, who can restore the dead to life, who can confer the same power upon others, who can deliver himself from the grave, is as much superior to the rich, the rulers, and the heroes of this world, as the heavens are above the earth.

If he had appeared in power and splendor, if he had subdued vice by force of arms, and established his kingdom upon earth, and ruled over the willing nations, giving them just and holy laws, and taking innocence and virtue under his protection, such an enterprize, so accomplished, had indeed been great and glorious; but as in this case the means would have been proportionate to the end, it would have been nothing when compared with the deliverance which he wrought, and the victories which he gained, not by human means, nor by worldly wisdom, but by a most wonderful and unparalleled

lel'd

lel'd method, by submitting to poverty and contempt, by avoiding honours, by suffering indignities, by dying upon the cross, by sending out a few ignorant and obscure men, who with no other arms than patience and meekness, and with no other art than speaking the truth, though opposed by the learned and the mighty, introduced a religion which spread itself through the world.

The national religion of the Heathen, and their idolatrous worship, as established by their laws and customs, and received by the vulgar, was so strange, absurd and inconsistent, besides its variety in different countries, that it is not easy to give an account of it. But briefly, and in general, it seems to have been founded on these suppositions:

That there were many Gods, one of whom was superior to the rest;

That they were all concerned in the government of the world, and could do good or hurt to men, as they were disposed;

That they were far superior to men in power and knowledge, as also that they were immortal, but that else * they had like

* The inferior deities.

passions with men, were capricious, revengeful, and easily provoked;

That they only expected to have magnificent temples built for them, adorned with rich gifts, statues erected and sacrifices offered to them, hymns sung in their praise, persons dedicated to their service, feasts and solemnities kept in honour of them, that whosoever paid them such outward respect was religious, so that religion and virtue were two things. Add to this * that some solemn rites consisted in cruel, impure or indecent actions.

The *Gentiles*, though they had for the most part mean and false notions of religion, were more wicked than ignorant. We need not appeal to the testimony of the first Christians and to the Epistles of St. *Paul* for the truth of this: The Heathen writers, their poets, philosophers, and historians have left sad descriptions or scandalous proofs of the extreme corruption of the age in which they lived. Such a degeneracy amongst the *Gentiles* would probably produce in them an

* *Justin* xxi. 3. *Eusebius* de Vit. Const. III. 55, 58. Orat. de Laud. Const. 9. 13. *Socrates* Hist. Eccl. III. 2. *Le Clerc* on Exod. xxxiv. 15. *Whitby* on Ephes. v. 4.

aversion to a pure and holy religion, and to the disagreeable truths which opposed their favourite inclinations, and a dislike to those troublesome reformers who undertook to shew them the necessity of breaking off their bad courses.

The philosophers and other learned Pagans scorned, no less than the *Jewish* teachers, to be instructed by poor and obscure and illiterate men; and as the *Jews* objected that none of their rulers believed in Christ, so the *Gentiles* observed with great contempt, that the first profelytes to Christianity were chiefly of the lower sort.

The philosophers and the more learned amongst the *Gentiles* might be ranked under three sorts:

Such as worshipped one supreme God, and many inferior who under him governed the world;

Such as thought that there was no knowledge and certainty;

Such as believed no God, or no providence.

Their pride and high opinion of themselves would not suffer them to condescend to be taught by men of no reading and learning,

ing, and their firm adherence to their several sects, for which they were remarkable, made them obstinate in resisting the best arguments. There were in particular two or three notions much prevailing amongst them, which increased their prejudices against the Gospel :

First, that the learned might think as they would, and dispute as much as they thought fit, but that they ought to conform to the religion of their country, and keep it up, as it was delivered to them by their ancestors ;

Secondly, that * God did not require that all nations should be of the same religion, but was well pleased with the variety of worship which obtained in different places, according to the different notions which men had of the divine nature ;

Thirdly, † which seems to be a consequence of the two opinions before mentioned, that religion

* Vid. Socratem *Hist. Eccl.* IV. 32. Themist. *Orat.* 7. *ad Valent. Symmach.* apud Prudent. II. 773.

† Seneca says, concerning the religion of his country : *Quæ omnia sapiens servabit, tanquam legibus jussa, non tanquam Diis grata.* And — *Omne istam ignobilem deorum turbam,*

religion or piety towards the Gods, as it is distinguished from morality, was a thing of small moment in itself, and to be observed for reasons of state and for political purposes.

They had no notion of refusing to comply with established rites under pretence of conscience. They accounted Christians * inexcusably obstinate and perverse when they would not sacrifice to idols, and no better than fools and madmen, when they would suffer death rather than submit to the command of the Magistrate.

These were the persons who despised and ridiculed the first Christians, who resisted the Gospel during its progress, who wrote against it, and were the last defenders of

turbam, quam longo ævo, longa superstitio congeffit, sic adorabimus, ut meminerimus cultum ejus magis ad morem, quam ad rem pertinere. Apud Augustin. de Civ. Dei. VI. 10.

Hortabaris me] *ut — opiniones, quas a majoribus accepi-
mus de Diis immortalibus, sacra, cæremoniâs, religionesque
defenderem. Ego verò eas defendam semper, semperque defen-
di; nec me ex eâ opinione, quam a majoribus accepi de cultu
Deorum immortalium, ullius unquam oratio aut docti aut in-
docti movebit, &c. Cotta, apud Cicer. De Nat. Deor. III. 2.*

* *Neque enim dubitabam, qualecunque esset quod fateretur,
pervicaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri. Plin. Epist. x. 97.*

Paganism

Paganism, when under the Christian Emperors it was in a very declining condition.

In the heathen world were also many thousands who lived by the superstition of mankind, and who therefore would eagerly oppose a new doctrine, which if it prevailed, would put an end to their gain; and though, being illiterate, they could not write and dispute for Paganism, as the philosophers did, yet they could lie * in behalf of it, and denounce the wrath of the Gods, and stir up the populace against the Christians.

And accordingly, from time to time, † oracles were given out, either real or pretended, either by evil spirits, or by evil men, complaining of the Christians, as of enemies to the Gods, and exciting the *Gentiles* against them.

But the most dangerous enemies to Christianity were Magistrates, Princes, Roman

* *Haruspices has fabulas, conjectores, arioli, vates, et nunquam non vani concinnare fanatici; qui ne sue artes intereant, ac ne stipēs exiguas consultoribus excutiant jam raris, si quando vos velle rem venire in invidiam compererunt, negliguntur Dii, clamitant, &c.* Arnobius, L. I. p. 13.

† Lamprid. *Alexand.* 43. p. 993. in *Hist. Aug. Script.* Euseb. *Vit. Const.* II. 50, 51. Sozomen. V. 19. Chrysost. *Homil. de Babylâ.*

Emperors. When these were superstitious, or capricious and cruel, or when they thought it prudent to oppose any change in religion, lest it should hurt the state, the Christians were exposed to the fury of merciless tyrants. Of these Emperors some were remarkable for all wickedness; they had a will to do any mischief, and nothing to hinder them from doing as they would. They assumed to themselves divine honours, and hated every thing that looked like goodness, courage and liberty. Under some of these Emperors the Christians were treated with great inhumanity and cruelty; and, which seems strange, they met with ill usage under * some who had several good qualities, and from whom better things might have been expected; but the reasons for it seem to have been partly these:

1. Those Emperors who had many virtues, yet had their prejudices, † or their
super-

* Trajan, T. Antoninus, M. Aurelius.

† The Emperor M. Aurelius was prejudiced against the Christians, and in his own Book xi. 3. has censured very unreasonably, what he ought to have approved, their readiness and resolution to die for their religion.

superstition, and Christianity had been misrepresented to them; nor are any persons more liable than princes to receive bad impressions and false accounts, and to have the truth concealed from them.

2. By the † ancient *Roman* laws it was not permitted to introduce any new religion without

Aliud erat quod maximè gentiles in Christianos commovebat, quod hi scilicet pro bono Reipublicæ statu, aut Imperatorum, vel patriæ salute offerri sacrificia improbarent, iisque nec adesse, nec etiam sive per publicos, sive per privatos Imperatorum genios jurare acquiescerent. Ad hæc, Christiani a festis solem-nibus, ludis publicis, aliisque ejusmodi spectaculis quæ pro victoriis adversus hostes partis, aut Imperatorum natalitiis fieri consueverant, sese abhorreere testabantur. Hinc mirum non est, si Imperatores, etiam qui religiosiores et mitissimi habiti sunt, Christianos penitus extirpare conati fuerint, quos nempe non religioni solum suæ, sed etiam propriæ saluti adversari existimabant. Ruinart, Præf. in Act. Martyr.

† *Tertullian and Eusebius say that the Romans had an ancient law, which forbade the worship of new Deities without the permission of the Senate; ne quis Deus consecraretur, nisi a Senatu probatus. Apolog. ταλαίην νόμον κενεῖν θεῶν, μὴ ἄλλως ἢ διὰ πατρὸς Ῥωμαίων θεοποιεῖσθαι, μὴ ἔχει ἡμεῖς καὶ δόγματι συγκλήτου. Eccl. H. II. 2.*

Julius Paulus, who lived in the time of the emperor Alexander Severus, has preserved to us an ancient law relating to this subject: Qui novas, et usu vel ratione incognitas religiones inducunt, ex quibus animi hominum moveantur, honestiores deportantur, humiliores capite puniuntur. Sentent. Receptar. L. V. Tit. 21.

Under

without the leave of the Magistrate, much less a religion which directly tended to overturn all the establish'd rites and ceremonies.

3. The

Under the same Title, he has another law against sooth-sayers and pretenders to inspiration, who are ordered to be beaten, banished, &c. *ne humanâ credulitate publici mores ad spem alicujus rei corrumparentur, vel certe ex eo populares animi turbarentur.*

In the *Acts of the Apostles* xvi. 21. some of the inhabitants of *Philippi* bring this accusation against *Paul* and *Silas*: *These men teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive neither to observe, being Romans.* Where see *Grotius*.

Cicero de Leg. XI. 8. *Separatim nemo habessit Deos; neve novos, sed ne advenas, nisi publice adscitos, privatim colunto.* [In the same book *sacra nocturna* are accounted unlawful without particular leave.]

Plato has the same law. *Ἦε καὶ μὴδὲ εἰς ἐν ἰδίᾳς οἰκίᾳς ἐκλήθω. θύειν δ' ὅταν ἐνὶ νύκτι ἐν ἰνῇ, πρὸς τὰ δημόσια ἢ ὅσων* &c. *Sacella nemo in privatâ domo habeat. Cum verò animum quis ad sacrificandum induxerit, ad publica sacrificaturus accedat.* &c. and the transgressors of this law are to be punished. *De Leg.* X.

Porphry says of *Ammonius*, who, as he pretends, left Christianity for Paganism, *πρὸς τὴν κατὰ νόμους πολιτείαν μετέβηλετο*, *ad vivendi rationem legibus consentientem descendit*, whereas *Origen* (says he) lived *Χριστιανῶς καὶ παρὰ νόμους*. *Euseb.* E. H. VI. 19. This was the common language of the *Pagans*.

If *Ulpian's* Treatise on the duty of Proconsuls were extant, we should know what Edicts had been published against Christians by the Emperors, down to the time of *Alexander Severus*. *Domitius [Ulpianus] de officio Proconsulis Libro VII. Rescripta principum nefaria collegit, ut doceret quibus*

3. The people and * the Governors of provinces sometimes persecuted the Christians

pœnis adfici oporteret eos, qui se cultores Dei confiterentur. Lactantius Inst. Div. V. 11.

Pliny, in his memorable Epistle to *Trajan* X. 97. enquires of him how he should proceed against the Christians.

Trajan, in his Rescript, so far spared the Christians, that he forbade them to be sought after, or to be condemned upon the evidence of nameless informations. But, if a prosecutor appeared, he ordered them to be put to death, unless they recanted. *Plin. Ep. X. 98.*

However, as *Pliny's* Letter to *Trajan* did not set the Christians in a bad light, so the Emperor's reply was in some measure favourable to them. He seemed willing to connive at them, and not to use them rigorously.

Afterwards *Adrian* gave a Rescript to *Minucius Fundanus*, [to be found in *Euseb. IV. 9.* and at the end of *Justin's* first Apol.] which is obscure. It does not manifestly exempt Christians from punishment; and yet it seems in some degree to favour them, and might have been so interpreted by a judge who was disposed to put the mildest construction upon it. The Christians often appealed to it.

* See *Eusebius E. H. VI. 41. IX. 6.* where it is said that *Peter of Alexandria* ἀθρόως ἔτρω καὶ ἀλόγως, ὡς ἂν Μαξιμίνου περὶ ἀξάν]θ, ἡν κεφαλὴν ἀποτέμνειν which *Valesius* translates, *subito et absque ullâ probabili causâ, utpote Maximino jubente, capite truncatur.* I think it should be, *quasi jussisset Maximinus.* The edicts against Christians were then repealed, and *Maximinus* at that time rather secretly encouraged than openly commanded those cruelties.

Melito, bishop of *Sardes*, in the apology which he dedicated to the Emperor *M. Aurelius*, says; τὸ γὰρ εἰδὲ πῶς ποτὶ γενόμενον, νῦν δὶώκεται τὸ τῶν θεοσεβῶν γένος, καινοῖς ἐλαυνό-

ans without any particular leave or order from the Emperor.

4. The

ἐλαυνόμενον δόγμασι κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν· οἱ γὰρ ἀναιδῆς συκοφάνται καὶ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων ἔρξαι, τὴν ἐκ τῶν διατάγματων ἔχοντες ἀπορμήν, φανερώς ληστεύουσι, νύκτωρ καὶ μεθημέραν διαρπάζοντες τὰς μηδὲν ἀδικῶντας. — καὶ εἰ μὲν σὺ κελεύσαντος ταῦτα πράττειν, ἔσω καλῶς γινόμενον· δίκαιος γὰρ βασιλεὺς ἐκ ἀν' ἀδίκως βελεύσασθαι πάποτε· καὶ ἡμεῖς ἡδέως φέρομεν τῷ τοιούτῳ θανάτῳ τὸ γέρας. ταύτην δὲ σοι μόνην προσφέρωμεν δέησιν, ἵνα αὐτὸς πείσῃ ἐπιγνὼς τὰς τῆς τοιαύτης φιλονεικίας ἐργάτας, δικάως κείνους εἰ ἀξιοὶ θανάτῳ καὶ τιμωρίας, ἢ σωτείας καὶ ἡσυχίας εἰσὶν· εἰ δὲ καὶ παρὰ σὺ μὴ εἴη ἡ βελὴ αὐτῇ καὶ τὸ καὶνὸν τῷ διατάγματι, ὃ μηδὲ κατὰ βαρβάρων πρέπει πολεμίων, πολὺ μᾶλλον δεόμεθά σοι, μὴ περὶ δὲ ἡμᾶς ἐν τοιαύτῃ δημῳδεῖ λεηλασίᾳ. Pious men are now persecuted and harassed through all Asia by new decrees, which was never done before: for impudent sycophants, and such as covet the possessions of others, taking occasion from the edicts, rob without fear or shame, and cease not to plunder those who in nothing have offended. — And if these things are done by your order, it is enough, all is well, for a just Prince can never decree any thing that is unjust, and we shall take a pleasure in submitting to your will, and account it an honour to die at your command. Only this favour we beg of you, that you would first inform your self concerning men who are obstinate and inflexible, [in a good cause, as they think, in a bad one, as their enemies pretend] and then judge, as your own equity shall direct, whether they deserve punishment and death, or impunity and quiet. But if this resolution and this new decree, not fit to be enacted against barbarians and enemies, proceeds not from you, much more may we entreat you that you would not give us up unprotected to this publick injury and popular devastation. v. Euseb. E. H. IV. 26.

4. The Emperors disliked the frequent * assemblies and clandestine meetings of Christians

The place deserves to be produced, were it only to shew the politeness of the old Christian Apologist. In the Interpretation of φιλοφεικίας I have followed *Valesius*, to whom I refer the reader.

* *Ab nullo genere non æque summum periculum est, si cætus et concilia, et secretas consultationes esse sinas. M. Porcius Cato, apud Liv. XXXIV. 2. At Crotona, trecenti ex juvenibus cum — separatam a ceteris civibus vitam exercerent, quasi cætum clandestinæ conjurationis haberent, civitatem in se converterunt, &c. Justin. XX. 4.*

Mæcenas is said by *Dio Cassius*, LII. p. 561. *Ed. Steph.* to have given this advice to *Augustus*; τὸ μὲν θεῶν, πάντῃ πάντως αὐτὸς γε σέβει καὶ τὰ πάτρια, καὶ τὰς ἄλλας τιμῶν ἀνάγκασε τὰς δὲ ξενίζοντας τί περὶ αὐτὸ καὶ μίσει καὶ κόλαζε, μὴ μόνον τῶν θεῶν ἕνεκα, — ἀλλ' ὅτι καινὰ ἵνα δαίμονια οἱ τοῖσιν αἰετὶσφύροντες πολλὰς ἀναπέθουσιν ἀλλοτειονομεῖν καὶ τέτε καὶ συνωμοσίαι, καὶ συσάσεις, ἱλαίαι τε γίγνονται, ἅπας ἥκιστα μοναρχία συμφέρει. *Worship the deity your self, by all means, according to the custom of the country, and compel others to do the same; and abhor and punish all those who would make any innovations in religion, not only for the sake of the gods, — but because such persons, substituting new deities, prevail upon many to observe foreign laws and institutions; and hence arise conspiracies, confederacies and fraternities, which are not at all expedient in a monarchy.*

Pliny tells *Trajan* that he had forbidden such societies, and that the Christians had obeyed his order — *quod ipsum facere desisse post edictum meum, quo, secundum mandata tua, heterias esse vetueram.*

Magi

tians, as giving an opportunity to cabals and conspiracies.

5. Christians were sometimes persecuted in a manner which (upon the Pagan supposition that they offended against the laws and deserved to die for it) must be acknowledged not to have been the most violent and bloody; for it appears evidently in Ecclesiastical History, and in the Acts of the

Magi auctores fuere Trajano ut hæterias, id est, sodalitates sive collegia omnia, vetaret, ut videre est apud Plinium, exceptis quæ religionis nomine, Paganicæ scilicet coibant, L. I. §. Sed religionis, C. de Collegiis. Cum verò homines naturâ ament sodalitates, factum inde ut nemo esset in Imperio Romano qui non in sodalitatem deorum alicui dicatam nomen daret, &c. Grotius ad Apoc. XIII. 16. See also Columbus on the writer de Mortib. Persec. c. 34.

Severus gave a rescript ordering information to be made to the Prefect of Rome against those who should hold unlawful assemblies; which probably affected the Christians, as Baronius observes 204. §. 12.

Celsus objects these clandestine meetings to the Christians. See Origen contr. Cels. p. 4.

Tertullian says very well *Apol. 39. Hæc coitio Christianorum merito sane illicita, si illicitis par, merito damnanda, si quis de eâ queritur eo titulo quo de factionibus querela est. In cujus perniciem aliquando convenimus? Hoc sumus congregati, quod et dispersi: hoc uni-versi, quod et singuli; neminem lædentes, neminem contristantes. Cum probi, cum boni coeunt, cum pii, cum casti congregantur; non est factio dicenda, sed Curia.*

Martyrs, that sometimes * a few persons only were seized and put to death, to intimidate the rest and to give a check to their increase, and that the Christians visited them in prison, and attended them, when they suffered, in great numbers.

AMONGST the bad dispositions which keep men in error and ignorance, there was one which was more eminently peculiar to the *Gentiles* than to the *Jews*, namely a great carelessness and indifference about all religion in general.

Men of rank and fortunes, of wit and abilities, are often found even in Christian countries to be surprisingly ignorant of religion and of every thing that relates to it. Such were many of the Heathen; their thoughts were all fixed upon other things, upon reputation and vain-glory, upon wealth and power, upon luxury and pleasure, upon business or learning. They thought, and they had reason to think, that the religion of their country was fable and forgery, and

* Arrius Antoninus in Asiâ cum persequeretur instanter, omnes illius civitatis Christiani ante tribunalia ejus se manu factâ obtulerunt; cum ille paucis duci jussis, reliquis ait, ὦ δειλοὶ, εἰ θέλετε ἀποθνήσκειν, κρημνὸς ἢ βρόχος ἔχετε. *Tertullian* ad Scapulam cap. ult.

a heap of inconsistent lies, which inclined them to suppose that other religions were no better, and deserved not to be examined. Hence it came to pass that even when the Apostles preached the Gospel, and wrought miracles in confirmation of a doctrine every way worthy of God, many *Gentiles* knew little or nothing of it, and would not take the least pains to inform themselves about it. This appears plainly from ancient history.

About the time of the Apostles, and a little after, flourished * some learned men in the heathen world whose works are still extant. These men must have known that there was a religion called the Christian religion; but their silence about it, or the very little that they say of the Christians, or the false account which they give of them, affords reason to suspect that they never desired to be informed concerning Christianity, and that they understood nothing of it.

We read in the *Acts* of the Apostles, that *Gallio*, when the *Jews* brought St. *Paul* before him, would not give them a hearing.

* See *Le Clerc de L'Incredulité*. Par. I. ch. 5. whence this remark is borrowed.

He

He thought it unreasonable, that *Paul* should be punished by him because he differed from his countrymen in matters of religion; and he thought right: but whether the doctrine taught by *St. Paul* were true or false, that he never considered for his own information, and therein he was very careless and negligent.

When *St. Paul* pleaded his cause before *Festus*, his discourse was altogether to the purpose; but because it turned upon a religious subject, it presently tired the judge; he would hear no more about it, and he told *St. Paul* that much study and learning had made him mad.

When *St. Paul* preached to the *Athenians*, he gained few profelytes. His auditors were men of learning and understanding; but they had more pride than knowledge, and more vanity than good sense, and therefore they left him, and neglected the opportunity of receiving further information and instruction.

Another prejudice which the *Gentiles* entertained against the Gospel, arose from the mean or bad opinion which many of them had

had of the *Jews*. For * a considerable time they made little distinction between *Jews* and *Christians*, accounting Christianity to be only a particular sort of *Judaism*.

The *Gentiles* † called the Christians atheists, because they taught that the Gods of the nations were either nothing at all, or dead men, or Dæmons, because they worshipped a spiritual Deity in a spiritual manner, and had no temples and no images.

When the Gospel began to spread in the world, the tares, as Christ foretold, sprang up along with the good seed, several here-

* When therefore *Nerva* forbade to accuse any person of *Judaism*, it is probable that Christians came in for a share of the benefit. Dio LXVIII. p. 769. Fabric. *Luc. Evang.* p. 222. The Christian religion in its beginning was persecuted more by the *Jews* than by the *Romans*. The *Romans* had granted the *Jews* liberty of conscience, and of observing their own laws, not only in *Judæa*, but in other Countries where they were settled, as appears in many places of *Josephus*, as *Ant.* XVI. 10. XIV. 7. and in *Philo*. Indeed in the time of *Tiberius*, laws were made and executed to check *Jewish* and *Ægyptian* superstitions. *Tacitus Ann.* II. 85. *Suetonius Tiber.* 36. *Seneca Epist.* 108. *Josephus Ant.* XVIII. 4. The *Jews*, probably, suffered little from these Edicts, and insinuated themselves again into the Emperor's favour. The like may be said of the Edict of *Claudius*, mentioned *Acts* xviii. 2. See *Grotius* on *Rom.* xvi. 3. 18. and *Pref. to Galat.* and *Whitby* on *Galat.* vi. 12.

† Justin M. and other Apologists,

tics

tics arose, who both taught false and wicked doctrines, and led very vitious lives. The ancient * Christians complain frequently that the

* Justin. M. See Tillemont, CARPOCRATIENS, Hist. Eccl. Tom. II. Irenæus I. 24. Edit. Oxon. observes that the *Carpocratians* brought disgrace on the Christian name by pretending to assume it, though they had nothing common with Christians either in opinions, or in morals, or in way of life; and then adds these words: *Sed vitam quidem luxuriosam, sententiam autem impiam ad velamen malitiæ ipsorum nomine abutuntur.*

The passage is corrupted. Grabe gives it up, as a place which he could not correct, and two emendations of it are proposed, one by Massuet, the editor of *Irenæus*, the other by Le Clerc, *Bibl. Choïs.* xxv. 237, which I shall not transcribe, because I think that they give us the sense indeed, but not the words. The likeliest way to discover where the fault lies, is, from this old *Latin* version to guess at the *Greek*, which seems to have been thus; Ἄλλὰ τὸν μὲν εἶον ἄσωτοι, τὴν δὲ γνώμην ἄσεβῆς, πρὸς (or εἰς) ἐπικάλυμμα τῆς κακίας αὐτῶν, ὀνόματι καταχρῶνται. That is, literally; *sed vitam quidem luxuriosi, sententiam autem impii, ad velamen malitiæ ipsorum, nomine abutuntur.* But they, *luxurious in their lives, and impious in their doctrines, make a bad use of the name [of Christians] for a cloke of their wickedness.*

Irenæus alludes to Pet. I. II. 16. μὴ ὡς ἐπικάλυμμα ἔχοντες τῆς κακίας τὴν ἐλευθερίαν.

Somebody who thought that the substantives and adjectives ought to have agreed, changed *luxuriosi* and *impii* into *luxuriosam* and *impiam*.

So II. 37. — *enunciare profunda et incredibilia mysteria prurientibus aures.* *Irenæus* wrote, κνηθομένοις τὴν ἀκοὴν, from

the *Gentiles* would not * distinguish between the heretics and the true disciples of Christ, and that they laid the crimes of these false brethren

from *Tim. II. IV. 3.* as others have observed. *Prurientibus aures* is the same construction as *vitam luxuriosi*, which greatly confirms my conjecture.

The old translation which we have of *Irenæus* is close and unpolite, and for that reason may often discover to us the original; as might easily be shewed in a multitude of places.

* Hence we may see why *St Paul* says to *Titus*; *A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.* For by the account which ancient Christians have given us of ancient heretics, we find that they were turbulent factious men, who wanted to make themselves heads of parties, or to sow dissention amongst Christians, that in effect they denied the authority of *Moses*, of the prophets, and of the Apostles, and that they blasphemed the Creator of the world, that their morals were as bad as their belief, and that they surpassed the *Pagans* in wickedness. Such men could feign themselves Christians only for bad purposes, and it was fit that they should be rejected from Christian societies, especially after they had been admonished once and again. Self-condemned they were, either, first, because they must have known in their own hearts that they had not the same belief with those to whom they had joined themselves; or, secondly, because perhaps, when they had been formerly admonished, they had owned themselves inexcusable, and had promised a better behaviour. Thus the heretic *Cerdo* acknowledged his fault once and again, and was pardoned and received, till at last for repeated offences he either was absolutely rejected by the Church, or left it of his own accord. See *Eusebius Eccl. H.*

brethren to the charge of Christianity. That the singular innocence and piety of the Christians did not secure them from malicious and false accusations, appears by the first Epistle of St. *Peter*, in which he observes, that the *Gentiles* spake against them as * evil doers.

IV. 11. and *Valesius* there, and *Tillemont*. H. E. Tom. II. *Marcionites*. Art. 6.

If *Tertullian* be not mistaken, *Marcion* and *Valentinus* were excommunicated twice at least, *semel et iterum*, and *Marcion* repented at last, and would have been received into the Church, but *morte præventus est*. *Tertullian de Præscript*. See *Tillemont*, *Marcionites*, and *Bayle's Dict.* under that word. See also *Tillemont*, E. H. Tom. IV. *Sabelliens*.

There seems to be no small difference between the heretics of whom St. *Paul* speaks, and those who, though they fall into errors, yet desire to know and to believe whatsoever Christ and his Apostles have taught, and to do what they require, and often are not seduced from the right way by any apparent motives of vice or interest.

The *Manichæans* were far enough from being heretics of the better sort. You may see an account of them in *Tillemont* H. E. Tom. IV. and the recantation of a *Manichæan*, before he could be admitted into the Church, in *Cotelerius* Patr. Apost. Vol. I. p. 543. Ed. Cler. Yet *Augustin*, addressing himself to them, treats them with great lenity and compassion, *contr. Ep. Manich. cap. 11. Tom. VIII. Ed. Ben. col. 151*. He had been one of them himself, and knew how hard it was to shake off inveterate errors and prejudices:

Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.

* See *Whitby* on *Cor. i. v. 1*.

Because

Because the Christians assembled together frequently, and that secretly and in the night, in time of persecution, the *Pagans* took occasion to forge a * base calumny, and to affirm that they met in that manner to commit the most execrable crimes. This story, though no proof of it was ever produced, found credit amongst some, which indeed is the less wonderful, because wicked † men are usually inclined to think others as bad as themselves, and the *Gentiles* knew very well that in some of their own religious assemblies held in the night-time all works of darkness had been committed.

But the blameless lives, and the shining virtues, and the patient sufferings of the Christians dissipated by degrees these idle reports, and those *Jews* and *Gentiles* who had any candour and ingenuity, thought them to be ‡ spiteful and ridiculous.

* Justin & the Apologists. See *Minuc. Fel. ix.* & *Davies.*

† *Ex nonnullis comperi, persuasissimum habuisse eum (Neronem) neminem hominem pudicum, aut ullâ corporis parte purum esse: verum plerosque dissimulare vitium, et calliditate obtinere.* Sueton. *Neron.* 29.

‡ See Justin. *Dial.* p. 155.

The * novelty of the Christian religion, and the antiquity of *Paganism* was another prejudice of the *Gentiles*. Where was your religion a few years ago? said the *Romans*. We follow our ancestors, as they, with good success, followed theirs. We have experienced the profitableness of our sacred rites and ceremonies; the Gods whom we serve have protected and rewarded us, and raised our nation from small beginnings to a state of great wealth and power. This loose and popular argument they urged very gravely, as if it had been a sufficient defence of their foolish superstitions.

The plainness of the Gospel, and the artless simplicity with which the Apostles and first teachers of it discoursed, was matter of offence to the *Gentiles*, and truth appeared foolishness to them, because it was unadorned. They required a better choice of words, a more elegant manner of expression, more vivacity and fancy, more method

* In opposition to this, *Eusebius* undertakes to prove that Christianity, in a certain sense, is as old as mankind. E. H. I. 4. The Emperor *Constantine* says the same, which perhaps he had learned from *Eusebius*. See *Euseb. vit. Constant. II. 57*. Justin M. had said the same, *Apol. I. 69*.

and regularity, and more of the art of reasoning. Philosophy and oratory, of which they were so fond, had spoiled them, Philosophy made them vain and conceited, and taught them to defend silly notions with captious and deceitful reasonings; and what was called eloquence at * that time, though much studied and esteemed, had degenerated, a bad taste beginning to prevail, which made them despise the unaffected style of the New Testament.

They complained of the Gospel, that † it treated men like children, and required an unreasonable condescension and submission from them, commanding them to believe every thing without examination and upon the bare authority of Christ and his Apostles, and not proving its assertions by an argumentative method.

The truths relating to faith and practice, propounded to us in the Gospel, are indeed

* The time of Nero.

† Origen contra Cels. I. p. 8. et VI. *Credo quia impossibile est*, is often mentioned as a folly of zeal in some old Christian writer. Take it as it stands in Tertullian; *Crucifixus est Dei Filius: Non pudet, quia pudendum est. Et mortuus est Dei Filius: prorsus credibile est, quia ineptum est. Et sepultus resurrexit: certum est, quia impossibile est.* De Carne Christi.

E

usually

usually affirmed, and not proved according to the rules of reasoning. But every studious person knows that argumentative proofs of these things are sometimes intricate, obscure, and above the reach of the bulk of mankind, and that * they may be opposed by ingenious men with subtle objections which may perplex a person of an ordinary capacity. Therefore we may suppose that one sent from God to reform and instruct the world will have recourse to some plain and satisfactory way of establishing his authority, which must be by working miracles, or by fulfilling ancient prophecies, or by foretelling future events, and that when he has thus prepared men to obey him and trust in him, he will command as a Law-giver, rather than reason as a philosopher.

The end of religious teaching is to make men wise to salvation, and if nothing be wanting to accomplish this end, there is no reason to complain that the † style is

* *Argumenta a Philosophis producuntur speciosa in utramque partem; nec omnium est de eorum vi dijudicare.* Grot. ad *Hebr.* XI. 3.

† See Le Clerc on *Cor.* 2 xi. 6. and Hammond and Le Clerc on *Galat.* xi. 6.

fade and homely, or that the common ways of arguing are not observed. He who undertakes to instruct others, and has no authority besides that which he can obtain by raising in them a good opinion of his wisdom and abilities, should omit none of those arts of persuasion which ingenious and learned men have cultivated, that he may set truth in the fairest light: but he who comes from God, and to whom God bears testimony, has no occasion for these methods of gaining credit. He ought to be heard with reverence and submission, though as *St. Paul* says, his bodily presence be weak, and his speech contemptible. His very imperfections are in one respect a recommendation to him, as they tend to prove that his doctrines are not of his own invention.

Besides, the simplicity of the Gospel suits with the subject, which is for the most part either an historical narration, or a collection of precepts. Even in * human laws studied eloquence

* *Quæ quidem tradita sunt breviter, ac nude; nec enim decebat aliter: ut cum Deus ad hominem loqueretur, argumentis affereret suas voces, tanquam fides ei non haberetur: Sed, ut oportuit, est locutus, quasi rerum omnium maximus iudex; cu-*

eloquence is out of place. When God speaks and commands, perspicuity and brevity are the most proper ornaments.

Yet we need not acknowledge that the Scriptures are void of those graces which are esteemed in human compositions *. There is in them beauty and sublimity where the subject requires or admits it; though it seems often rather owing to the things of which they treat, than to the choice and disposition of words.

When the Christians appealed to the miracles by which the Gospel was supported,

jus est non argumentari, sed pronunciare verum. Lactantius III. 1.

Simplex et nuda veritas est luculentior, quia satis ornata per se est: adeoque ornamentis extrinsecus additis fucata corrumpitur: mendacium verò specie placet alienâ. Idem.

Non probo, quod Platonis legibus adjecta principia sunt. Legem enim brevem esse oportet, quo facilius ab imperitis teneatur, velut emissâ divinitus vox sit. Jubeat, non disputet. Nihil videtur mihi frigidius, nihil ineptius quam lex cum prologo. Mone, dic quid me velis fecisse: non disco, sed pareo. Seneca Epist. 94.

Βραχὺς δὲ καὶ σύντομος παρ' αὐτοῦ λόγος γεγενῆσιν, ἔστι σοφιστὴς ὑπὸνέχων — *Breves autem et compendiosi fuere [Christi] sermones, non enim sophista erat*—Justin M. Apol. I.

* Grotius says that St. Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians, *rerum sublimitatem adæquat verbis sublimioribus quam ulla unquam habuit lingua humana.*

the

the *Gentiles* replied that those miracles were wrought by * magic.

This † was certainly a foolish prejudice and a weak objection. If the *Gentiles* meant that the miracles were not real, but only illusions and false appearances, this was confuted by the testimony of thousands who had seen those wonderful works, and by the nature of many of those works, which was such that there could be no deceit in them. Or if they meant that there were certain wicked arts and charms by which bad men could compel the Gods to obey them and to assist them in performing supernatural things, this is a notion ‡ which was only fit for poetry. Or lastly, if they meant that the miracles were wrought by the interposition of inferior or evil powers, and not by the assistance of the supreme God, the answer to their objection is this: The Christian religion is founded upon natural religion, and

* Celsus, in *Origen*, p. 7. and many others.

† Many *Pagans* were of opinion that the boasted arts of Magic were folly and deceit. See *Plin.* XXX. 2. *Sueton. Nero.* 51.

‡ See Broukhus. on *Tibull.* I. II. 43. and Grotius *de Ver.* R. C. IV. 8.

supposes that there is a God, and that he is most wise, most powerful, and * most good, Christ and the Apostles appealed to the God
and

* All religion, natural or revealed, and all our better hopes are founded upon the supposition that God is good ; and as this is of all truths the most important, so there are many clear and strong proofs of it. I shall only mention one or two.

1. To suppose that God is not good, is to suppose him weaker, and more imperfect, and worse than the worst of his creatures.

In men, every evil action may be ascribed to the temptation of present profit or pleasure, to a power which the mind has of fixing its thoughts entirely upon the object which it desires, and of overlooking the ill consequences arising from it, and in some measure to error and mistake. Thus enticed and deluded a sinner acts, never chusing evil for its own sake. But God, if he were an evil being, would be disposed to evil neither by mistake, nor temptation, nor passion, nor advantage, and would chuse evil purely as evil.

2. It is the observation of a celebrated philosopher, that πᾶς τὸ οἰκεῖον ἔργον ἀγαπᾷ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγαπηθεῖν αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἔργου, ἐμψύχως γενομένου, &c. *Aristot. Ethic. Nicom. IX*, that the Artist loves the work of his hands better than his work would love him, if it were endued with sense and reason ; and that the person who confers a great benefit upon another, loves him whom he obliges better than the obliged person loves him. To which we may add that parents generally love their children more than they are beloved by them. And yet in all these instances, gratitude, one would think, should make the love of the inferior to be the strongest ; but experience shews that it has not this effect. These observations may be reduced to a general truth, that
love

and Father of the universe, to the first Cause of all things, they declared themselves to be his ministers, appointed by him to reform mankind, they declared that all other religions were false, and that all the Gods of the *Gentiles* were no gods, they declared that they were sent to extirpate idolatry, and to overturn the dominion of evil spirits; and in attestation to this they wrought miracles. Here was a solemn appeal to the Almighty, and a public challenge to all other deities, and to evil Dæmons; it is not therefore * reasonable to suppose either that God would permit men to abuse his name and authority for bad purposes and give such power to impostors, or that the Gods of the *Gentiles* and evil spirits would not exert their utmost power against their professed and open enemies, and hinder them from working miracles, if they were able †.

The

love descends more than it ascends; and we may be permitted, I think, to apply this to God and our selves, and to say that our great and good Creator and Benefactor loves us far better than the most dutiful of us love him,

* This will likewise answer the objection of the *Jews*, that Christ wrought miracles by the assistance of the Devil.

† It has been objected to miracles in general, that God, who is most wise and unchangeable, cannot alter that

The Christian religion required an open profession before men, which seemed also
unrea-

course of nature which with perfect wisdom he has established.

1. It would be proper to know what notions the objectors have of the Deity. If by the word *God* they mean the god of *Strato* or of *Spinoza*, 'tis very true that such a God cannot alter any thing.

2. When a miracle is wrought, the course of nature is altered, but the will and purpose of God is not altered, who could not establish a course which he should not be able to change, and who, when he established it, knew what changes he would at certain times make in it.

Though miracles seem to be the best credentials which a person can produce, it is possible that by being frequently repeated they may lose some of their effect on some tempers, and make a fainter impression upon them. May we suppose this to have been the case of some careless and negligent men who saw the miracles of Christ and of his Apostles?

Christ often appeals to his miracles as to a direct and sufficient proof of his authority; and his Apostles speak the same language. The *Pagans*, when they were afterward, press'd with this argument, to elude the force of it, used to say that Christ and his disciples wrought miracles by magic art. Some of the Fathers, as *Justin* Apol. I. p. 48. and *Irenæus* II. 57. thought that the best way of removing this objection was to appeal to the prophecies, and to say, that since the miracles of Christ had been foretold, they must have been true miracles, performed by the divine assistance, and not illusions or tricks of magic. Others, as *Tertullian*, in a certain place, and *Lactantius* V. 3. went so far as to own that the miracles of Christ would not have been proved to be true miracles, nor distinguished from magical operations, unless they had been foretold by the prophets.

Arnobius,

unreasonable to the learned *Pagans*, who, as we observed before, were generally of opinion

Arnobius, in his first Book, has reasoned better on this subject, though reasoning was not his talent, and his judgment was not equal to his learning and vivacity. *Origen* prudently insists upon miracles as proving the truth of Christianity no less than prophecy. *Contra Cels.* p. 5.

The *Gentiles* also opposed miracles to miracles, and the Fathers would not undertake to affirm that such a thing could not possibly be. When the *Pagans* said that some by imploring the aid of their Gods had been cured of diseases, the Christians replied that it might be true, for that their Gods were Devils, who, *irrepentes corporibus occultè, ut spiritus tenues, morbos fingunt, terrent mentes, membra distorquent, ut ad cultum sui cogant, ut nidore altarium vel hostiis pecudum saginati, remissis, quæ constrinxerant, curasse videantur.* Minucius Felix. p. 137.

The miracles ascribed to Christ and his Apostles recommend themselves to our belief on the following accounts.

They were wrought by persons who solemnly appealed to God, and who declared that they would perform them.

They were wrought in a public manner.

Before enemies and unbelievers.

In a learned age and civilized countries.

Not with any air of pride, vanity, and ostentation.

Not for the sake of lucre, or for worldly advantage.

In confirmation of precepts and doctrines good and useful to mankind.

At a time when men wanted neither power nor inclination to expose them if they were impostures, and were in no danger of being called Atheists and Heretics, and of being insulted by the populace, and persecuted by the civil Magistrate for ridiculing them.

They

opinion that if a man led a virtuous life, it mattered not much what religion he professed, that the supreme Being chose to be worshipped in various ways, according to the various notions which different people entertained of him, and that every one was obliged for the sake of public peace to conform to the religion established in his country.

I shall not treat this opinion with contempt: it is perhaps the most * specious thing that the *Gentiles* had to say for themselves.

They were various and numerous.

Of a permanent nature, and might be reviewed and re-examined.

Had nothing fantastical and cruel in them, but were acts of kindness and beneficence.

They had ceased for a long time before Christ appeared, and therefore would raise the attention of men.

They converted multitudes to the faith.

Were attested by proper witnesses.

Foretold by the prophets, and such as the Jews expected from the Messiah. See *Grot. de Ver. R. C.* IV. 17.

Acknowledged by adversaries. See *Grot. de Ver.* II. 5. III. 7. and *Le Clerc's* notes, III. 14. *Cudworth* *Intell. Syst.* p. 271. *Huet. Dem. Ev. Prop.* III. 6, 8. *Bayle* *Dict. Hierocles.* Bishop *Chandler* *Def. of Christian.* p. 429.

* *Marcilius Ficinus*, in his *Treatise of the Christian Religion*, has in some measure adopted the sentiment. He contends, ch. 4. that all religions, how differing soever, are so far

selves. Let it be granted that a *Pagan* was not obliged to enquire diligently after all the religious notions and the various modes of worship which obtained up and down in the habitable world, nor to spend his time in examining what the philosophers had to urge for their several tenets, that it was enough for him to practise those virtues which had the general approbation, and to honour the Deity, *more patrio*; if we should make even these large concessions, yet when a Religion, fair and amiable, just and holy, and attested by miracles, condescended to visit him and to come to seek him; to refuse her a hearing and to reject her with scorn was an immoral behaviour, shewed a contempt of truth and of the Deity, and was a scandalous indolence in a man, who probably would not have refused toil of body and attention of mind, if pleasure, or profit, or praise had called him to it.

To profess doctrines which we believe to be false, for worldly advantage, for the sake of quiet, for political reasons, and out of

far good as they teach men to honour the Deity; and he adds, *forſitan et varietas hujusmodi, ordinante Deo, decorem quendam parit in univerſo mirabilem.*

ſubmiſſion

submission to the civil Magistrate, is a vitious excess which nothing can justify. Not to be content with the liberty of following our own sentiments, but rudely to attack what is accounted true and sacred in the nation where we live, is an extreme on the other side. The dictates of prudence and of good manners, and the reverence due to civil society, are things which ought to be carefully considered by those whose inquiries have laid them aside from the religious opinions commonly received.

Lastly, the *Gentiles* disliked Christianity, because it was, in their way of thinking, an unfociable and domineering religion*, which rejected all Gods, except one, and condemned all other religions as impious and detestable.

SUCH were the prejudices of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, which made so many of them unwilling and unfit to receive the Christian religion. But there is reason to think that

* When *Dionysius Alex.* was brought before *Æmilian*, and exhorted by him to adore the Gods, he replied, that Christians worshipped one God, maker of all things. Why, so you may, said *Æmilian*, you may worship your own God as much as you will, if you will but worship our Gods also, *Euseb. E. H. VII. 11.*

the number of unbelievers, amongst those to whom the Gospel was first preached, was not altogether so great, as is commonly imagined *. Besides those who professed Christianity, and those who rejected and opposed it, there were in all probability multitudes between both, neither perfect Christians, nor yet unbelievers; they had a favourable opinion of the Gospel, but worldly considerations made them unwilling to own it. There were many circumstances which inclined them to think that Christianity was a divine revelation, but there were many inconveniences which attended the open profession of it; and they could not find in themselves courage enough to bear them, to disoblige their friends and family, to ruin their fortunes, to lose their reputation, their liberty, and their life, for the sake of this new religion. Therefore they were willing to hope that if they endeavoured to observe the great precepts of morality, which Christ had represented as the principal part, the sum and substance of religion, if they

* See Epiphanius *Hæres.* 30. c. 9. p. 133. and Petav. *Not.* p. 58. where some strange things are related, the truth of which I would neither affirm nor deny.

thought

thought honourably of the Gospel, if they never spake against it, if they offered no injury to the Christians, if they did them all the services that they could safely perform, they were willing to hope that God would accept this, and that he would excuse and forgive the rest.

The account which we have of those times is very short; but enough is said in the New Testament to shew that this supposition is not groundless, and that many thought and acted in this manner; for we are there told that several believed in Christ, but durst not own it, some because they loved the praise of men, others because they feared the *Jews*, because they would not be put out of the synagogue, others because they would not part with their possessions. *Joseph of Arimathea* is said to have been secretly his disciple *, *Nicodemus* seems to have had the same disposition; and afterwards *Gamaliel*, and other Pharisees who opposed the persecution and the punishment of the Apostles, were probably not a little

* Tillemont, *Hist. Eccl.* Tom: II. has collected many things concerning *Nicodemus* and *Gamaliel*, principally from *Lucian de Inventione S. Stephani*.

inclined to Christianity. Thus it was then, and thus it has been ever since. Truth has had concealed and timorous friends, who keeping their sentiments to themselves, or disclosing them only to a few, complied with established errors and superstitions, which they disliked and despised. They who are at all acquainted with history know that a * great number of such examples might be produced.

THE opposition which the Gospel experienced from the *Jews* and *Gentiles* arose principally from their vices. To this cause the scriptures ascribe their unbelief, and observe that truth is hidden from those who love darkness rather than light, whose deeds are evil, who hate to be reformed, whose minds are carnal and cannot be subject to the law of God, and who have pleasure in unrighteousness. Of such persons it is said, that none of them shall understand.

* Erasmus Epist. 583. says, *Quid ego potuissem opitulari Luthero, si me periculi comitem fecissem, nisi ut pro uno perirent duo? — Multa quidem præclare et docuit et monuit, atque utinam sua bona malis intolerabilibus non vitiaffet! Quod si omnia pie scripsisset, non tamen erat animus ob veritatem capite periclitari. Non omnes ad martyrium satis habent roboris. Vereor ne si quid inciderit tumultus, Petrum sim imitaturus.*

Virtue and goodness are the health of the soul, and vice is a disease in it. A sickly and infirm body cannot undergo hard toil, nor can a mind vexed and discomposed with irregular appetites attend to the search after truth, wanting that evenness of temper and that vigour which are necessary in such enquiries.

The entire opposition between the principles of religion and the inclinations of a vitious mind, makes a bad man an improper judge of morality.

A man seldom judges right in a cause between himself and his enemy; prejudice and passion incline him to give an unfair sentence. In such a situation is the sinner when he sits down to examine the truth of religion; for if religion be indeed what it is commonly supposed to be, he is a rebel to God and to reason, a mere fool, and yet not excusable upon that account, because his folly is not a natural, but an acquired infirmity. And what can such a one do? He must hate the glass that sets his deformity before him, he must turn away his eyes and his thoughts from divine truths, and confound the differences between right and wrong,

wrong, that he may find some plea for his conduct.

Since God is the Father of all, since his mercy is over all his works, since he puts it in the power of every person to perform all that he requires from him, and since men are exposed to many temptations, it is reasonable to think that from this supreme Being, from this eternal fountain of truth and of all good gifts there issues a light which lighteth every one that cometh into the world, and that whosoever hath a love of things good and praise-worthy, and a desire of acting a virtuous and rational part in his station, has also a blessing from God, and a secret influence upon his heart and understanding to guide and improve him.

This blessing, as it is given to the good, so it is withholden from the wicked. The mind that delights in unrighteousness and prefers it to the divine favour, is left to itself, to its injudicious choice, and to the fatal consequences of that choice. God withdraws himself from it, and all is darkness and disorder.

II.

The propagation of the Gospel.

THE swift and successful progress of the Gospel, which preached by a few inconsiderable persons overcame a violent opposition, and in a short time spread itself through the world, is commonly and justly supposed to afford convincing proofs of the truth of the Christian religion; and on that account deserves to be seriously and carefully examined.

1. The conversion of the *Gentiles* is a proof of the truth of our religion, if it be considered as the completion of several prophecies.

There are passages in the Old Testament applied by Christians to our Lord and to his religion, which must be confessed to have in them some obscurity, and to be attended with some difficulty; but there are others clear and express: and of this kind are the predictions *

predictions * concerning the calling of the *Gentiles*.

There are † many places in the Old Testament which declare that in due time there should be a conversion of the *Pagan* world, all nations should turn to the Lord, and worship him, and his name should be great amongst the *Gentiles*, that true religion taught at *Jerusalem* should prevail over idolatry, that God should send forth his Law thence, and rule over the converted nations, guiding and instructing them by his holy word, shewing them their former errors, and teaching them to lead a new life, and that they who should submit to these divine precepts, should also lay aside their mutual animosities, their hatred and malice, and

* It may be objected; if the calling of the *Gentiles* was so clearly foretold, how could it be said in the New Testament to have been a mystery, a mystery to men and Angels?

That multitudes of *Gentiles* should one day forsake idolatry, and be converted to the worship of God, this could scarce be unknown, after the prophets had said so much about it; but that the *Gentiles* should become God's people without being made proselytes to *Judaism*, and that the ceremonial law should be antiquated, this was not so clearly declared as to be understood before the event explained it.

† They are collected in *Fabric. Luc. Evang. p. 7. or Huet. Dem. Ev. Prop. IX. cap. 148.*

should be remarkable for charity and universal love.

Thus speak the prophets concerning this great and happy change, and from the manner in which they speak we may observe that this reformation of the *Gentiles* should extend itself very far, that many nations were to leave their idolatrous rites, and to serve the true God; for nothing less can well be understood by these expressions; *All the ends of the earth*, and, *the Gentiles from the rising of the sun to his going down*.

We may observe that therefore these prophecies cannot be supposed to have been fulfilled before the preaching of the Gospel. Many *Gentiles* from time to time became proselytes to the *Jewish* Religion, but the number of those proselytes was not considerable enough to deserve to be described in such a manner; nor were * whole nations converted to the worship of the true God.

* Unless, perhaps, the *Samaritans*, and the *Idumæans*. The *Idumæans* embraced *Judaism*, being compelled to it by *Hyrcaus*. Joseph. *Antiq.* XIII. 9. after which they were incorporated into the *Jewish* nation, and ceased to be a distinct people.

Our Lord came into the world, declared himself to be the person foretold by the prophets who should work this great change, and in whom the *Gentiles* should trust, and sent forth his disciples to make converts in all nations, promising them success through his assistance.

Thus we see the prophets and our Lord affirming, that idolatry should decline, and true religion be established in its room; we see Christianity propagated by the Apostles through the earth, and prevailing over heathen superstition wheresoever it appeared; we see also that this was an event which lay out of the reach of human foresight. The prophets had no reason from the appearance of things to believe that such a thing should come to pass. The worship of God was then confined in a manner to the *Jews*; the *Jews* were in danger of being some time or other subdued by more powerful nations, of being led away into captivity or destroyed; they had little intercourse with other people, and were hated or despised by many of the *Gentiles*; they often fell into the errors and vices of their neighbours. Upon all these accounts it seemed more probable that the

time might come when the *Jews* should be cut off, or become idolaters, than that the Heathen should be converted by their means. And when our Lord said that the conversion of the *Gentiles* was at hand, idolatry was as flourishing as it had been in the time of the Prophets, superstition in many places as prevailing, irreligion as general, and vice, at least, as triumphant as ever; the *Romans*, whose dominion was then very extensive, had no high opinion of the *Jews*; yet Christ declares that his Apostles, though seemingly unequal to the undertaking, should succeed in it, and reform the corrupted world. The conversion therefore of the *Gentiles*, considered as an event which could not be foreseen by men, which always appeared improbable, and which was * foretold by the

* *Rutilius*, who lived when, to his sorrow, these declarations were fulfilled, says ;

*Atque utinam nunquam Judæa subacta fuisset
Pompeii bellis, imperioque Titi.*

*Latius excisæ pestis contagia serpunt,
Victoresque suos natio victa premit.*

Itiner. 395.

Seneca had said the same of the *Jews*; *victi victoribus leges dederunt*, apud *August.* De Civ. Dei. VI. 11. But *Rutilius* by his *Jews* means the Christians, whom he durst not openly abuse.

prophets

prophets and by Jesus Christ, is a just proof that Christianity is a divine revelation, and that the Spirit of God, who so long before declared its swift and extensive progress, assisted in its establishment.

2. The propagation of Christianity is a proof of its truth, because it could never have made its way in the world * without the assistance of miracles.

Not many years after Christ's death we find great numbers of Christians amongst the *Jews*, and *Gentiles*. We cannot account for their conversion merely from the love of novelty, from superstition and enthusiasm, from the promises and threats contained in the Gospel, from the purity of its morality, from the good lives and patient sufferings of the disciples of Christ. We must of necessity suppose that miracles were wrought to convince them; and that, for the following reasons.

The Apostles, when they began to preach the Gospel †, declared that Jesus Christ had done many mighty works, and was risen

* *Origen* uses this argument *Contr. Cels.* p. 30.

† *Mohammed*, prudently enough, always professed that he had no power to work miracles.

from the dead, and had sent them to convert the world, and had given them a power to work miracles in proof of their mission.

By declaring this they were under a necessity of working miracles, or of losing credit amongst all men. If they wrought no miracles, they confuted themselves, and could never have made any considerable number of disciples. Since therefore it appears that they pretended to have received the holy Spirit, to speak languages which they had never learned, to perform many miraculous works, and to confer the same gifts upon believers, and since they prevailed on multitudes of all nations, ranks, ages, and employments to forsake the religions in which they were educated, and to embrace Christianity, the conversion of so many profelytes is a proof that the Apostles were indeed endued with power from on high.

St. *Paul* planted and preached the Gospel at *Corinth*, no obscure place in some remote corner of the world, but a city great and populous, flourishing in trade, wealth, and learning, filled with orators and philosophers, advantageously situated in *Greece*, and called the light and pride and glory of *Greece*.

To

To these *Corinthians* he writes two epistles; in the first he blames them for some faults which they had committed, amongst which this is particularly mentioned, that they had not always made the best and most discreet use of spiritual and miraculous gifts; he gives them some directions how to exercise these gifts, and he tells them that charity, that is, the love of our fellow-creatures, and a study to promote peace, happiness, and virtue amongst men, is a more excellent thing than any miraculous power whatsoever, which, by the way, is not the language of an enthusiast.

In his next Epistle he commends the respect and obedience which they had paid to him; and to convince some of them still farther that he deserved such regard, he reminds them of the miracles which he had wrought amongst them; *I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest Apostles, though I be nothing, Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders and mighty deeds.*

Now, if the *Corinthians* had really no such preternatural gifts, and if St. Paul had never

ver wrought any miracles amongst them, it is impossible to think that they would have retained any regard to him and to his doctrine. If we think so, we must suppose them to have been persons who lived in a polite country and had not the sense of savages, men who had nothing of men besides the outward shape and resemblance, men of a different kind from any that the world ever saw before or since; for the most enthusiastic sect would forsake their founder and teacher, if he should write them long and grave epistles full of matters of fact which they all knew to be false, appealing to miracles which he had never wrought, and directing them to a discreet use of powers which themselves never had.

3. To establish a new religion even amongst a few people, or in one single nation, is a thing in itself exceedingly difficult. To reform some corruptions which may have spread in a religion, or to make new regulations in it, is not perhaps so hard, when the main and principal parts of that religion are preserved entire and unshaken; and yet even this very often cannot be accomplished without an extraordinary concurrence

currence of circumstances, and may be attempted a thousand times without success: But to introduce a new faith, a new way of thinking and acting, and to persuade many nations to quit the religion in which their ancestors had lived and died, which had been delivered down to them from time immemorial, to make them forsake and despise the Deities which they had been accustomed to reverence and worship, this is a work of still greater difficulty. The prejudices of education and the stubbornness of superstition seem almost invincible; and therefore the prophet *Jeremiah*, when he upbraids the people for * neglecting their own religion, and embracing the idolatrous worship of their neighbours, observes that their behaviour in this was not only base and stupid, and ungrateful, but new and unparallel'd. *Hath any nation changed their Gods, which*

* I say, *neglecting*, rather than *forsaking* and *rejecting*. For the people of *Israel* and *Judah*, even in their worst and most idolatrous times did never absolutely and totally renounce the true God; they worshipped false Gods with and besides him. But God who would not suffer the honour due to him alone to be thus given to others, nor bear a rival, often resents and represents it as no better than apostasy. See the Commentators on *Acts* viii. 42.

yet are no Gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

But besides the resistance which superstition and the prejudices of education would form, worldly policy could not fail to discountenance such an attempt. Changes in religion very often produce changes in the state, and according to the maxims of government, all Princes and Magistrates look with an evil eye upon teachers of new doctrines, as upon seditious and dangerous persons.

4. It cannot be denied to be a very strange and surprising thing that persons whose circumstances and natural abilities were low and mean, should have succeeded in so great an undertaking.

It might justly be expected of one who should perform such a thing, that he should be a victorious and virtuous prince, who should make himself both revered and beloved, or a philosopher remarkable for wisdom and eloquence, skilled in all the arts of persuasion, and formed by nature to insinuate himself into the favour of men. But when persons of mean extraction, of no human learning, poor, obscure and friendless

friendless set about it, nothing can follow but scorn and disappointment, unless the Divine assistance be added, which can give strength * to weakness and wisdom to ignorance, and accomplish its purpose by the most unpromising means.

5. If these persons are not only of mean rank and abilities, but exposed to slander and calumny, and greatly hated by the world, there is still less prospect of success. Whosoever would command the attention, the respect and obedience of men, must stand fair in their opinion, as one who is disinterested and who seeks their good. He who, though undeservedly, has lost his reputation, has lost many opportunities of doing service to mankind: what comes from him, though commendable and profitable in itself, is often suspected, slighted, and ill received. I have already shewed the great hatred which the generality of the *Jews* and

* *Mirum est quam parum acuti essent Apostolorum nonnulli, sed datâ operâ tales a Christo electos fuisse verisimile est; ne dum putabat se intelligere quis esset, quidve moliretur, quidpiam ingenio suo freti, quod Evangelio noceret, aggredierentur; neve possent dogmatum, quæ nunciabantur, inventores haberi. Clericus ad Joan. XIV. 7. Vide etiam Valesium ad Constant. Orat. in Eusebio, cap. II. p. 687.*

Gentiles bare towards the first Christians, and the causes and effects of that hatred. Therefore the progress of the Gospel in spite of all the lies which had been told concerning it, of all the malice and opposition which its professors underwent, can only be ascribed to the prevailing force of truth and innocence, and to the protection of the Almighty.

6. The establishment of Christianity in so many nations, and amongst persons of all ranks and conditions is an argument in favour of it. Never was there a religion which in this respect can be compared with it; for it united the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that is, persons in many respects the most opposite, it brought over rich and poor, learned and unlearned, it spread through barbarous and savage nations, and through the most polite and wise people, and made its progress far and wide.

The Apostles began with the *Jews*, and though they could not succeed so well as to reform the whole nation, though the bulk of them remained incorrigible till destruction overtook them, yet the harvest was by no means contemptible. Twenty years were
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not passed from Christ's resurrection, when St. Paul coming to *Jerusalem*, was told by the Disciples, *Acts xxi, 20. Thou seest, Brother, how many * thousands of Jews there are which believe.* So mightily did the word of God prevail, even in the capital city of that disobedient people. In other nations the success was greater, and in less than forty years after Christ, an innumerable multitude of believers were found in most parts of the known world.

A religion which can thus recommend itself to all tempers and meet with so wide an approbation, must in all probability be founded on truth, and agreeable to the dictates of reason.

7. To convert nations to a strict religion from religions which give great indulgences, and are more suitable to depraved inclinations, is a difficult thing. This was the case in the propagation of the Gospel; for the *Greek* and *Roman* Gentiles were not very rigid in their practical notions of morality, and accounted many things to be either harmless, or small faults, which the Gospel

* *πόσαι μυριάδες*, how many myriads, ten thousands, that is, how great a number.

absolutely

absolutely condemned; and the *Jews* by their own interpretations had made their religion compliable and accommodated to their passions. Now when persons have been thus educated, and taught to account themselves virtuous and pious at a cheap rate, and without labour and pains, when they think that they can secure to themselves God's favour here and hereafter, and yet pursue their pleasures with little restraint, they are extremely indisposed towards a religion which requires quite another strictness in thought, word, and deed. It appears to them a severe, morose, and melancholy system, a cruel tyranny, and a heavy burden, and there must be bright and overbearing evidence to work a thorough reformation in them.

8. The conversion of* very vicious persons from sin to righteousness is still more difficult, as experience and reason will teach, and is justly compared in Scripture to a resurrection from the dead, and to changes ordinarily or naturally impossible. Though Christianity made its principal progress a-

* *Origen* urges this argument *Contr. Cels.* p. 21. and in other places.

mongst well-disposed minds, yet several were won over to it, who had been remarkably wicked before; and this is a proof that there must have been very plain and strong indications of its truth which could overbear all the obstinate opposition of habitual vice.

9. The conversion of multitudes to a * suffering state, and to a religion so little favourable as it was at that time even to our innocent inclinations, is another argument in behalf of the Gospel. We all naturally love friends, relations, reputation, liberty, ease and quiet, food and raiment, and life. It is reasonable to suppose that a man will not part with all these upon no evidence that God requires it, and no security that he will reward it.

The conversion of so many, who laid down their lives for Christ, in whatsoever way we consider it, abounds with proofs of the truth of the Gospel. The courage and constancy †, with which the first Christians

* *Nulla modo fieri potest, ut quisquam tanti aestimet equitatem et fidem, ut ejus conservandi causâ nullum supplicium recuset, nisi iis rebus assensus sit, quæ falsæ esse non possunt.*
Cicero Acad. Quæst. II. 8.

† In this, says Chrysostom, the Christians far surpassed the holy persons recorded in the Old Testament, none of whom is said to have rejoiced in suffering for righteousness sake.

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underwent all that human nature shuns and fears, is astonishing. Even women and young people suffered with unshaken resolution tortures which we cannot read without horror. It is very reasonable to suppose that God and his good Spirit enabled them to bear in this manner what they bear for his sake.

The Christian Church was sometimes exposed to persecutions which naturally and in the ordinary course of things must have put an end to a false religion. I know it has been often said that persecution is not the way to destroy but rather to animate and enlarge a sect. Ill usage makes men hate doctrines which tyrannical oppressors would force upon them, and fonder of their own opinions than they were before; ill usage often gives them a religious turn of mind, weans them from a love of the world, and teaches them to place their hopes and confidence in God; and therefore the constancy with which a person endures sufferings for his religious sentiments is not a certain proof that his notions are well-grounded. All this will hold true concerning that less violent kind of persecution which extends only
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to banishment, imprisonment, fines, and the like. But when it proceeds so far as to take away life in a cruel manner, bare obstinacy of temper will seldom hold out; a rational conviction and a divine assistance seem necessary to support persons under so severe a trial.

It has been also said that almost all sects have their martyrs; and true it is that men may suffer, and have suffered for false opinions *. But the case of the first Christians is very different. They suffered in behalf of facts. They gave their testimony to signs and wonders which they had beheld with their own eyes, and on which their faith was founded; in this they persisted, and for this they died. But no man, not even an enthusiast, will lay down his life in confirmation of facts which he knows to be false.

I have endeavoured to shew that from the propagation of the Gospel the truth of it

* *Ut pro conceptâ opinione mortem quis subeat fieri potest, quanquam et hoc rarum est; at us quis idem faciat pro testimonio rei quam falsam esse novit, et unde nihil aut ipsi aut aliis boni sperari possit, omnibus sani judicii hominibus incredibile videtur.* Grotius ad Matt. xxviii. 13.

may be proved, as it was foretold by the Prophets, as it absolutely required the assistance of miracles, as it forced its way through the greatest difficulties and opposition, and as it was conducted and accomplished by persons naturally unqualified for the undertaking.

In this we may see one difference between the methods of human wisdom and of Divine wisdom. Human wisdom spares no pains and industry in seeking out and applying helps and instruments proper in the ordinary course of things to bring about its designs; but Divine wisdom often chuses means in all appearance unsuitable, and yet in reality the most effectual; which conduct of Providence St. Paul thus describes: *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.*

This great event our Lord probably had in view when he said to his Disciples; *He that*

that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall be do also, and greater works than these shall be do; because I go unto my Father. We cannot name any miracle wrought by any Apostle which in any sense can be said to surpass the miracles wrought by Christ, except the conversion of the *Gentile* world, which, when we consider the difficulties attending it, and the opposition made to it, and the wonderful works wrought to accomplish it, and the happy effects and consequences of it, may well be considered as a more illustrious evidence of God's power, wisdom, and goodness, than even our Saviour's miracles of casting out devils, healing the sick, and raising the dead.

I have taken notice of the causes, which in the ordinary course of things should have stopped the progress of Christianity. If every thing had been against it, and nothing for it, it must have perished at its birth. Let us therefore consider, on the other hand, what there was to help its progress, and to recommend it to mankind; and here we shall find at the same time new proofs of its divine original, since every

thing that contributed to its establishment, is a testimony of its excellence.

1. First then the prophecies concerning the calling of the *Gentiles*, and the * miracles wrought by the Christians, were a sufficient recommendation of the Gospel to all serious, inquisitive, and ingenuous minds. But these evidences have been already considered.

2. Another thing which might reconcile the learned *Gentiles* to Christianity was a resemblance and conformity, greater or less, between the theological doctrines of revealed religion, and the † opinions of some or other of the wiser *Gentiles* in various ages and

* We have *Origen's* testimony, that many, besides *St. Paul* and *Cornelius*, were called to Christianity in a miraculous manner. *Contr. Cels.* p. 35. And *Grotius* quotes it, and approves it on *Luke* xiv. 23. *Tertullian De Anim.* 47. says the same; as also *Eusebius*, *Jerom*, and *Sozomen*. See *Eusebius* VI. 5.

† Namely, one supreme God.

The Platonic Trinity, of which the first is τὸ Ἐν, ἢ Ἀγαθόν, One, most Simple, and absolutely Good and Perfect; the next Νῆς or Λόγος, Wisdom, Reason, the Word, who is the δημιουργός, the maker of all; thirdly Ψυχὴ, the universal Soul or Spirit, pervading all things.

Seneca's words, though they seem only to express so many names, or ways of considering God, are singular and remarkable

and places, amongst whom are found evident traces of the doctrines of one God and Father of all, of a Mediator, of the original beauty and perfection of the creation, of the fall of men and Angels, of a restitution to a happier state, of the conflagration of the world, of the souls immortality, of future rewards and punishments.

markable. — *Quisquis formator universi fuit, sive ille Deus est potens omnium, sive incorporealis Ratio, ingentium operum artifex, sive divinus Spiritus, per omnia, maxima, minima, æquali intentione diffusus.* — Indeed he adds, *sive Fatum*, &c. Consol. ad Helv. 8.

The doctrine of a Mediator, son of the Deity, one or more, who conveyed blessings from God to men, and recommended men to the favour of God.

The doctrine of an evil Dæmon, who though very powerful, was inferior to the good Deity, and should be abolished by him.

The doctrine of three states of the world, that all was created fair and good in its kind, that there has been a fall and depravation of this original goodness, and that there shall be a restitution of things to their ancient beauty and perfection.

Proofs of these tenets may be found in Cudworth *Intell. Syst.* Hyde *Relig. Vet. Pers.* Ramsay's *Dissert.* subjoined to the *Travels of Cyrus*. Vitranga in *Isai.* 45. p. 496. Jos. Mede, B. III. Ch. III. p. 626, and *Comment.* in *Apocal.* p. 475. Prideaux *Lett. to the Deists.* Sect. 7. Fabricius *De Ver. Rel. Christ.* C. VIII. p. 312. Huet. *Alnet. Quæst.* p. 290, &c. not to mention many others.

3. Christianity had likewise this advantage, that its precepts were for the most part agreeable to the doctrines which some of the best *Pagan* authors had delivered,

The *Gentiles*, though in their searches after wisdom and knowledge they had fallen into many errors, yet had likewise discovered many excellent truths; and if a judicious collection * had been made of the useful doctrines which some or other of them in

* The conformity of Philosophy and Christianity in many things has been shewed by several of the ancient Fathers, particularly by *Clemens Alexandrinus*, and by *Eusebius* in *Præp. Evang.* I shall only quote *Lactantius*; *Docemus nullam sectam fuisse tam deviam, nec philosophorum quenquam tam inanem, qui non videret aliquid ex vero. — Quod si extitisset, aliquis, qui veritatem sparsam per singulos, per sectasque diffusam colligeret in unum, ac redigeret in corpus, is profecto non dissentiret a nobis.* *Inst.* VII. 7. See *Grotius de Ver. C. R.* IV. 12. The Philosophers all prepared the way, though undesignedly, for the Gospel, by exposing and overturning the popular and fabulous religions. Epicureism itself, though of all schemes the remotest from Christianity, yet in some things agreed with it, as;

1. In recommending temperance and sobriety. See *Lucretius* II. 14. &c. *Juvenal*;

Quantum, Epicure, tibi parvis suffecit in hortis.

Seneca does justice to *Epicurus* on this head many times.

2. In supposing that this world would one day perish, *Lucret.* II. 1144.

3. In

in various times and places had taught, a system of morality might have been drawn up which would bear no small resemblance to the dictates of the Gospel. And this doubtless was a great advantage to Christianity, that the New Testament alone should contain in it every valuable truth which dif-

3. In despising and exposing the poetical, popular, and civil religion of the *Gentiles*. The impostor *Alexander*, says *Lucian*, was upon good terms with the Platonics, Stoics, and Pythagoreans, but mortally hated the Epicureans and Christians, and therefore gave out that *Pontus* swarmed with atheists and Christians, and that the people ought to drive them away with stones, if they expected to have the God propitious. And when he celebrated initiations of his own contrivance, on the first day of the ceremonies, proclamation was made: *If any Atheist, Christian, or Epicurean, comes to pry into the sacred rites, let him be gone. But ye who believe the God, approach, and be initiated, and happiness attend you! Then they cleared the place; and he began, saying, Out with the Christians; to which all the multitude answered, Out with the Epicureans.* καὶ ἐν μὲν τῇ πρώτῃ, περὶ ῥήσις ἦν τοιαύτη· ἂν τις ἄθεός, ἢ Χριστιανός, ἢ Ἐπικύρειός, ἢ καὶ κατὰ σκοπὸν τῶν ἱερῶν, φευγέτω· οἱ δὲ πιστεύοντες τῷ θεῷ, ἡλείθωσαν τυχὴ τῇ αγαθῇ. Εἴτ' εὐθὺς ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐξέλασις ἐγίνετο· καὶ ὁ μὲν ἠγάγετο, λέγων, Ἐξω Χριστιανός· τὸ δὲ πλῆθος ἅπαν ἐπεφθίγγετο, Ἐξω Ἐπικυρεῖος. *Lucian Alex.*

The reasons for which this Juggler turned out the Epicureans and Christians are plain enough: but *Dodwell* supposes that *Alexander* was afraid lest the Christians should break the spell, and drive away the evil spirit. *Disf. Cypr. XI. 30.*

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ferent persons at different times by a sober use of reason had discovered, without the errors which they had blended with those truths.

4. At the time when * the Gospel was first preached, there was a great number of *Gentiles*, who were profelytes to the *Jewish* Religion so far, that they worshipped the one God of *Israel*, and renounced the follies and vices of *Paganism*. Most of these persons were well-disposed to receive the Gospel, and were converted by the Apostles. They of whom our Saviour says, that the *Pharisees* made them twofold more the children of hell than themselves, seem to have been the other sort of profelytes, who received circumcision and the whole law of *Moses*.

5. Another cause of the progress of Christianity was the importance of the truths contained in the Gospel. The Apostles, when they had prepared men to believe and obey them, by giving sufficient proofs of their mission, proposed to them the Christian religion as the only way by which they could hope to avoid extreme misery in the world to come, and to obtain everlasting

* See *Mede* B. I. *Disc.* 3.

happiness.

happiness. A day of judgment, when every one should receive according to his works, a resurrection to eternal life or condemnation, were the motives by which they pressed repentance and obedience.

6. Another thing which contributed to the propagation of the Gospel was the amiable character of the Apostles and of the Christians of that age. The disciples of the Lord were examples of fervent zeal for the welfare of mankind, of an inoffensive behaviour, of disinterestedness and self-denial, of indefatigable industry, of the most extensive charity, of patience and courage and constancy, and of a regular practice of all that they taught. The first Christians * resembled their teachers in these good qualities, and it was no small advantage to them in their apologies for themselves and for their religion to be able to appeal boldly to their innocence and integrity.

That we may have a right sense of this, we should consider what it was to be a

* However we should not carry the notion of the sanctity of the old Christians too high; that they had their defects appears plainly from the Epistles of the Apostles and of *Clement Romanus*.

Christian in those days, lest we be deceived by the vulgar use of the word, and by the notion which we at present entertain about it.

To be a good Christian at that time was to be an example of well-tried virtue, of true wisdom, and of consummate fortitude; for he surely deserves the name of a great and a good man, who serves God, and is a friend to mankind, and receives the most ungrateful returns from the world, and endures them with a calm and composed mind,* who dares look scorn and infamy and death in the face, who can stand forth unmoved and patiently bear to be derided as a fool and an idiot, to be pointed out for a madman and an enthusiast, to be reviled as an atheist and an enemy to all righteousness, to be punished as a robber and a murderer. He who can pass through these trials is a conqueror indeed, and what the world calls courage, scarce deserves that name when compared to this behaviour.

* *Quem neque pauperies, neque mors, neque vincula terrent;
Responsare cupidinibus, contemnere honores
Fortis, &c. Horat.*

This constant and pious greatness of soul under the most afflicting circumstances was one of the means * by which Christianity was propagated. The example of a person who is humble and resolute in adversity, who places his whole faith in God, when God seems to forsake him; this example preaches the Gospel more effectually than the most ingenious and learned discourse, and inclines others to think and to say, surely that faith must be rational and well-grounded which produces such noble effects, and that religion must have God for its author which can support the mind under all difficulties and pressures.

7. Lastly, the Gospel presented to men a dispensation of such awful and impartial justice so admirably tempered with goodness, clemency and forbearance, that it appeared highly worthy of him from whom it proceeded, and as suitable to those to whom it was offered. It required a regular and universal regard to all righteousness, but it

* *Duris ut ilex tonsa bipennibus,
Nigræ feraci frondis in Algidò,
Per damna, per cædes ab ipsò
Ducit opes animumque ferro.*

Horat.

offered

offered an assistance which should add strength to human weakness: it gave no hopes to stubborn and habitual offenders; but it left room for repentance and amendment, and excluded none who by a change from vice to goodness would make themselves objects of the Divine mercy.

III.

The kingdom of Christ.

AMongst the offices which our Saviour sustained, the office of King is first in dignity. Under this character he is described by the Angel who was sent to his mother; under this character he is foretold by the prophets.

The first prediction of Christ's regal office is the promise which God made to *David*, that his house, and his throne, his seed and his kingdom should be established for ever, as the days of heaven, as long as the sun and moon should continue; of which promise mention is often made in the historical books of the Old Testament and in the *Psalms*. Hence the *Jews* concluded that from *David* should arise the *Messias*.

The Prophets frequently speak of this promised person, as of a king, and *David* *

* Psalm ii. xlv. cx.

often describes the child who should descend from him, as a great and mighty Prince.

I propose to consider,

I. When our Lord's kingdom began :

II. What are the particular characters of his kingdom, which should distinguish it from all other empires.

I. There is a kingdom which our Lord had from the beginning, as he was the Word of God, and the Son of God, and the person by whom God made all things. But the kingdom of which we are now speaking, is that kingdom which he was to receive when he became man, and which was foretold by the prophets, and concerning which the Angel thus speaks in St. *Luke's Gospel*; *He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.* And the time when it began is to be first considered.

The kingdom of Christ is commonly accounted to have begun when he ascended
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into heaven, and sent down the holy Ghost. Nevertheless our Lord may be truly said to have been born a king, and his kingdom may commence with his nativity, though he did not exert many acts of royal authority, or suffer his reign to be manifest before his ascension.

For soon after his birth the Wise men were guided by a heavenly light, and came and offered him presents, and paid him that worship which used to be paid to Eastern kings, and acknowledged him as the great king who was to arise in *Judæa*.

After this he continued in obscurity till he entered into his ministry, during which he gave some intimations of his royal dignity, and permitted himself to be acknowledged as a king, but sparingly and secretly, that he might not offend the civil magistrate; for,

First, he took upon him the name of *Messias* or *Christ*, and suffered it to be given to him. Now *Messias*, or *Christ*, in the opinion of all the *Jews*, was the name of that great king foretold by the prophets; and consequently all who believed him to be the *Messias* owned him for their king. *Na-*

thanael says to him; *Thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel:* and Christ accepts the acknowledgment. Afterwards, when he was entering into *Jerusalem*, all his disciples praised God, and said; *Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord.* At which the Pharisees were offended, and said to him; *Master, rebuke thy disciples. But he answered: If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.*

Secondly, he suffered himself to be called, *the Lord*, which implies as much.

Thirdly, it is the office of a king to give laws, and this office he executed.

Fourthly, when Pilate asked him whether he was a king, Christ owned to him that he * was; but to satisfy him, he told him farther, that his kingdom was not like the kingdoms of this world, and was not opposite to the *Roman*, or to any other hu-

* *Cum vero Jesus hic regem se fateatur, negari mihi videtur non posse regnum ejus aliquo modo inchoatum esse cum veritatem cepit docere: nam ita ipse apud Joannem regnum interpretatur. Neque obstat quod passim regni ejus initium duci videtur ab elevatione in cælum: id enim de plenâ regni possessione intelligendum est. — Certe potestas remittendi peccata, quam Jesus vitam mortalem agens exercuit, ad regnum pertinebat, ut et liberrima illa miraculorum pro arbitrio dispensandorum potestas. Grotius ad Mat. xxvii. 11.*

man government. This is that good confession which, as *St. Paul* observes, he witnessed before *Pontius Pilate*.

Thus did Christ's kingdom begin with his birth, but whilst he dwelt here below it was small and obscure, and escaped the notice of the world. His subjects were few, weak in faith, and not confirmed in their obedience, and they forsook him and hid themselves when he was in danger. His kingdom was like a grain of mustard seed; but still it was a kingdom. And therefore, being asked by the *Pharisees* when the kingdom of God should come, he answered; *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo here, or, Lo there, for the kingdom of God is within you.* Which is as if he had said; My kingdom does not make its first appearance, and is not ushered in with royal pomp and splendor, like the *Affyrian, Ægyptian, Babylonian, Græcian, or Roman*. It comes silently and steals upon the world unobserved; for indeed it is already begun, and you know it not.

Hitherto we have seen our Saviour's kingdom in its infancy; but as soon as he was

risen from the dead, and at his ascension, it began to be very visible and remarkable. Then as the lightning which shineth from one side of heaven to the other, so was the Son of man in that day. His glory and his Gospel were propagated through the world with amazing irresistible swiftness. And therefore the Apostles represent him as then invested with royal power, and beginning his reign, because it then began to be conspicuous. Thus St. *Peter* tells the *Jews* that God had raised up *Jesus* from the dead to set him on the throne of his father *David*, that he had set him at his own right hand and made him Lord of all, and Christ, or Messias, or the anointed king of *Israel*, that he had exalted him to his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour. And our Lord says of himself, after his resurrection, that all power was given to him in heaven and in earth. In the Revelation he is called, *King of kings, and Lord of lords*. This royal dignity, this high exaltation, this name above every name, to which Angels and men should bow, is represented by St. *Paul* as a reward which God conferred upon Christ for his humiliation and sufferings. If we there-

therefore consider Christ as man, it was a new dignity which he had not before his ascension, or rather, which he had in a more imperfect degree; but as he was the eternal Son of God, he had, as he says of himself, * glory with the Father before the world was.

II. The second thing which I proposed, was to examine what are the particular characters of Christ's kingdom which distinguish it from all other kingdoms, or, which amounts to the same, the peculiar characters of Christ, as he is a king.

1. Christ was not a temporal prince; his kingdom was not of this world; it differed in many respects from earthly kingdoms. It was not established like them either by human policy, or by human force, but by a few poor, obscure, helpless, illiterate persons. It experienced such an opposition as would infallibly destroy any earthly dominion: Kings stood up and rulers took counsel together against it,

* Joh. xvii. 5. *Glorify thou me*, &c. that is, says *Theophylact*, τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην με φύσιν ἀγαγε εἰς τὴν δόξαν ἣν εἶχον παρὰ σοὶ ἐγὼ Λόγος· which is preferable to the interpretation given by *Grotius*. But *Grotius* speaks otherwise in his *Ordin. Holland. Piet.* prope init.

and the wise and the learned joined with them, and for three hundred years, from time to time all kind of subtilty and violence and inhumanity was employed to overturn it; but the more it was persecuted, the more it flourished, and at last prevailed over all its enemies.

It was a kingdom erected in the hearts and over the consciences of men. It was a kingdom which consisted of subjects who entered into it and continued in it voluntarily, and were neither encouraged nor kept in awe by those methods which are most effectual in civil society. Temporal recompenses and temporal chastisements were sparingly administer'd in it. At its first establishment and for a considerable time after, the loss of friends and of fortunes and of life was the present prospect for those who should enter into it, and the recompense was eternal happiness after death.

2. Christ's kingdom was to extend itself over all nations, and to differ in this from human empires which had indeed been called universal monarchies, and whose kings and emperors had stiled themselves Lords of the world, but had no just pretensions

sions to such titles. Christ declares that all power was given to him in heaven and earth, that all things were delivered to him of his Father; and *St. Paul*, that at his name all should bow in heaven and earth. His kingdom then is universal, and all creatures are, or ought to be his subjects, all the inhabitants of heaven, and all mankind. Therefore they who serve and obey him are to be considered as his dutiful subjects, they to whom he is preached, and who reject his Gospel, are his rebellious subjects, they who receive his religion but live not according to it, are his disobedient and sinful subjects, and they who never had opportunities of hearing and learning it are to be considered as his ignorant subjects, who know not their true Lord and master; for he has a right to rule over them all, and in that sense is universal King.

But the number of those who should profess themselves to be, and who should indeed be his servants, is represented by the Prophets as exceeding great.

All nations, say the Prophets, and many people shall go and say, Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God

of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways and we will walk in his paths. — There shall be a root of Jesse, to it shall the Gentiles seek. — All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. — All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name. — Behold my servant — in whom my soul delighteth — he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. — I will give thee for a covenant to the people, for a light to the Gentiles. It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my salvation unto the ends of the earth. — The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the Sea. — From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the Heathen, saith the Lord of hosts. — I saw, says Daniel, and behold one like the son of man, — and there was given unto him dominion
and

and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Thus it was foretold of Christ, in general, that he should rule over all things; in particular, that he should have the throne of *David*, and rule over the house of *Jacob*.

3. Christ is called *a righteous branch*, and *the Lord our righteousness*; he is also called *the Prince of peace*. His kingdom was to be a kingdom of righteousness; piety and virtue were to flourish in his dominions; his kingdom was to be a kingdom of peace, as it should be established without war and bloodshed, and as his subjects should be quiet and peaceable. *Isaiah* says of the converted multitudes; *they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

And again, describing the amazing change that should be wrought in savage and cruel nations, he compares them to the wildest and fiercest beasts putting off their nature
and

and becoming tame and gentle. *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall feed them; and the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp.—They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.*

Concerning the completion of these prophecies there arises a difficulty, when we compare the predictions with the event. The objections I shall endeavour to state fairly, though in few words, and then proceed to the answer, to the solution of them.

The Prophets, as we have seen, describe the kingdom of Christ, first as extending in some sense over all people, and spreading itself through the earth; secondly, as comprehending in it the *Jewish* nation; and thirdly as a kingdom of concord and righteousness. But, first, there have always been, and there are now many great nations who make no part of the kingdom of Christ; secondly, the *Jews* continue in their unbelief, and our Lord has no subjects amongst them;

them; thirdly, there have been continual wars, persecutions, religious controversies, and wickedness in the Christian world.

To all which it may be answered;

It is reasonable to suppose that the holy Spirit of God, who inspired the Prophets, gave them a view of the kingdom of Christ, in general, from its establishment to the end of the world; and that they were led to represent it in their prophecies as it should be in its full lustre, in its highest degree of beauty and perfection; it is no less reasonable to suppose that the time is not yet arrived when his kingdom shall be in its most glorious state. It is therefore not to be accounted strange if the present condition of Christianity falls short of those great and magnificent representations contained in the prophecies.

But though these predictions have not yet received their entire completion, yet a great part of them has been remarkably and illustriously fulfilled.

Thus, though all nations of the earth have not embraced the Gospel, which event some prophecies, interpreted literally, promise and declare, yet its progress has been

as wide as its beginnings were small, so that according to the common way of speaking, we may justly say that its sound has gone out to the ends of the world, and that it has overspread the earth.

The first partial accomplishment of the prophecies concerning the propagation of the Gospel began in the days of the Apostles, when multitudes of *Jews* and *Gentiles* were converted in *Judæa* and its neighbourhood, in *Greece*, in the lesser *Asia*, in *Italy*, when amongst them there were some who had been enemies to Christ and to his church, and some of eminent rank and abilities, when these persons laying aside their mutual hatred and contempt, their superstitions and idolatries, their vices and debaucheries, lived in peace and friendship, and were illustrious examples of piety and virtue.

Christianity, thus established, continually increased, and multitudes of believers were added amongst the *Ægyptians*, *Assyrians*, *Arabians*, *Greeks*, *Italians*, *Spaniards*, *Gauls*, and other people.

The second accomplishment began in the days of *Constantine*, when the *Roman Emperors*

perors became Christian, and the empire by degrees followed their example.

The third began some time after, when many nations which were ignorant, barbarous and fierce, and might well be described by the Prophets as lions, bears, and wolves, received the Gospel, some sooner and some later, * as the *Goths*, the *Vandals*, the *Germans*, the *English*, the *Scots*, the *Saxons*, the *Bobemians*, the *Hungarians*, the *Poles*, the *Muscovites*, and many other people.

Secondly ; the objection that our Saviour should have at present no subjects amongst the *Jews*, may perhaps be thus removed.

By the ministry of the Apostles a great multitude of *Jews* were converted to the faith, not only at *Jerusalem* and in *Palæstine*, but in all those various and remote regions where the twelve tribes were scattered abroad. These *Jews* retained a great regard for the Law, and observed it along with the Gospel for a considerable time; but after the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the calamities which befel the nation, first un-

* *Franci, Germani, Alemanni, Saxones, Vandali, Hungari, Bobæmi, Poloni, Gothi, Angli, Frisii, Longobardi, Bulgari, Mosci, &c.*

der *Vespasian*, and afterwards under *Adrian*, these *Jewish* Christians, partly through disuse of the ceremonial Law, and partly through marriages with Christians of *Gentile* extraction, may be supposed to have been so mixed with them, that they lost all national distinction; which to them was indeed no loss at all, but a desirable thing. Their posterity therefore are now * subjects to Christ, though under the common denomination of Christians.

Thirdly, as to the wars and vices of Christians, these answers may be made.

It is extremely evident that the precepts of Christianity are calculated to promote peace and virtue. Therefore, according to the common style of Scripture, the Gospel may be said to have brought peace and virtue, † because it has brought every thing that is necessary to produce it.

* *Grotius* on *Rev.* xi. 15. observes that Christ may be said to rule over the *Jews* for ever, because *semper erit in Judæa Christiana religio. Quod verum fuit primum sub Paganis Imperatoribus, multò magis sub Christianis, sed et sub Sarracenis et Turcis in hunc diem.* I take the solution which I have proposed to be more probable.

† Vid. *Grot.* de Jure B. I. II. § 8.

The

The style of the prophets is poetical, lively, and lofty; and therefore their magnificent descriptions of the happiness and piety which should adorn the reign of the Messias may be restrained and understood in a sense somewhat lower than the words usually import.

The doctrines of the Gospel have undoubtedly produced at all times good effects in the minds of many Christians: they are peaceable and charitable, and ready to shew kindness to all men, in their private capacities, as far as the laws and public interests of their respective kingdoms and societies permit.

Christianity has made a happy alteration in those nations who have embraced it, nor have they that fierceness and barbarity which they had when they were *Pagan*.

The * benefits which Christianity has brought to those nations which have received it, are in many respects greater than we usually imagine.

In the *Gentile* world men were loose and unsettled in their principles; hence it came to pass that impurities of all sorts were scarce

* Eusebius *Præp. Evang.* I. 4.

reckoned

reckoned faults amongst them, that they made no scruple of * exposing infants, that they were cruel and inhuman towards † slaves and prisoners, and that they had public shews, in which men were obliged

* See Gerard. Noodt *Julius Paulus, sive de Partus Expositione*, &c.

† The Romans, who kept a multitude of slaves, often neglected them most inhumanly when they were sick, turned them out of doors, and sent them to the Island in the Tiber, where they left them to be cured by the God *Æsculapius* who had a temple there. The Emperor *Claudius* decreed that the slaves thus turned out should have their liberty if they recovered. And because some masters were so cruel that they killed them when they were sick, he ordered that they who did so should be punished as murderers. *Sueton. Claud. 25. Dio LX. p. 685. Adrian* wisely took away the power of life and death, which masters exercised over them. *Adr. in Hist. Aug. Script. c. 18. p. 169.*

The condition of slaves has ever been deplorable, and far worse than of the beasts. See how it is described by *Pignorius de servis. Cato* the elder, so much celebrated by the Romans, was a bad master to his slaves, and is justly censured on that account by *Plutarch*, in *Vit. Caton.* By the Roman laws a slave could not bear testimony without undergoing the rack. By the same laws, if a man were killed in his own house, all his domestic slaves were to be put to death, though their innocence were ever so evident. *Tacitus Annal. XIV. 42.*

Servi sunt ? imo homines. Servi sunt ? imo contubernales. Servi sunt ? imo humiles amici. Servi sunt ? imo conserui. si cogitaveris tantundem in utrosque licere Fortunæ, &c. Seneca Epist. 47. See the rest.

to fight with wild beasts, and to murder each other for the entertainment of the assembly. The Romans were excessively fond of this abominable diversion, and scarce can any writer amongst them be found who has declared a disapprobation of it, except Seneca * the philosopher.

Christianity has in no small measure removed these enormities.

Christi-

* *Casu in meridianum spectaculum incidi, lusus expectans et aliquid laxamenti, quo hominum oculi ab humano cruore acquiescant. Contra est. Quicquid ante pugnatum est, misericordia fuit. Nunc ommissis nugis, mera homicidia sunt; nihil habent quo tegantur — Sed latrocinium fecit aliquis: quid ergo meruit? ut suspendatur. Occidit hominem. Qui occidit, ille meruit, ut hoc pateretur: tu quid meruisti miser, ut hoc spectes? Seneca, Epist. 7.*

Homo, sacra res, homo, jam per lulum et jocum occiditur: et quem erudiri ad accipienda inferendaque vulnera nefas erat, is jam nudus inermisque producitur, satisque spectaculi in homine mors est. Idem Epist. 95.

There were some in the time of Cicero, and probably they were Greeks, not Romans, who condemned this barbarity, amongst whom I wish I could place Cicero himself: he says, *Crudele gladiatorum spectaculum et inhumanum nonnullis videri solet: et haud scio an ita sit, ut nunc sit: cum vero fontes ferro depugnabant, auribus fortasse multæ, oculis quidem nulla poterat esse fortior contra dolorem et mortem disciplina. Tusc. Disp. II. 16.*

The Emperor Marcus Aurelius, says Dio, so much disliked blood-shed and slaughter, that he ordered the Gladi-

Christianity has abolished polygamy, and in a great degree * slavery, and thereby has made the condition of millions far more easy than it would else have been.

It has † had some influence upon the civil laws ‡ of nations, and made them in

ators at Rome to fight with foils, or blunted weapons; Μάρκετος γε μὴν ἔλω τι φόνοις ἐκ ἔχαιρεν, ὥς τε καὶ τὸς μονομάχους ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ ὥσπερ ἀθλητὰς ἀκινδύνως ἐάει μαχομένους· σιδήρειον γὰρ ἐδέποτε ἐδενὶ ἀντὶ δούλων ὅξυ ἐδωκεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀμβλύειν, ὥσπερ ἐσφαλεμένοις, πάντες ἐμάχοντο.

To these we may add the Greek philosopher *Demonax*, who, when the *Athenians* were deliberating whether they should have *Gladiators* as well as the *Corinthians*, advised them not to vote for it, till they had pulled down the Altar of *Mercy*.

Ἀθηναίων σκεπτομένων κατὰ ζῆλον τὸν πρὸς Κοινδίους καλῶσάσασθαι θεὸν μονομάχων, προσελθὼν εἰς αὐτὰς, Μὴ πείθεσθον, ἔφη, ταῦτα, ὧς Ἀθηναῖοι, ψηφίσεσθε, ἀν μὴ τὴν Ἐλῆν τὸν βωμὸν καθέλῃτε. *Lucian Demon.*

It was a long time before Christianity could get the better of this custom. *Constantine* made a law against it, but it crept in again, and *Honorius* abolished it *A. D.* 403.

* The Gospel has not said indeed that it is unlawful to have slaves, but by its mild genius and temper it seems by degrees to have expell'd this tyranny from Christian kingdoms.

† *Leges Romanæ duriores erant, quam lenitas Christiana patiatur. Grotius de Jure B. I. II. § X. 4. ubi vide notas.*

‡ Thus, *Constantine* abolished the cruel punishment of crucifixion and of breaking the legs, and of marking the face with a hot iron.

in several respects more gentle and merciful.

It

He forbad to seize upon men's servants and cattle for the payment of taxes, and to put such debtors in common jayls, or to beat them.

He ordered that prisoners should be well used and conveniently lodged, and made laws in favour of slaves; and against excessive usury.

Valentinian I. made laws to release prisoners, not guilty of capital crimes, at *Easter*; and other Emperors did the same afterwards.

He ordered physicians to be appointed, with salaries, who should take care of the poor at *Rome*.

Gratian made a law, that those women, whose birth and condition obliged them to appear upon the stage, should not be compelled to it, if they were Christians.

Also that persons condemned to die should have thirty days respite. *Theodosius* confirmed this law.

Theodosius I. made laws in favour of the fortunes and families of condemned persons; and of those who had found a treasure.

Forbad that girls should be brought up minstrels, *tibicineæ*.

Made a law concerning wills; which greatly favoured the natural heirs against his own interest.

Made a law, that if any person, forgetting all modesty and decency, should revile the Emperor, and censure his conduct; he should not be called to account for it, nor suffer the punishment which used to be inflicted on such offenders.

Made a law against an infamous way of punishing women convicted of adultery, who had been compelled to be common prostitutes, if *Socrates* be not mistaken, *Hist. Eccl. V.*

18. See the place. But I agree with *Valesius*, who says;

It has been the cause of many * public charities, and has provided for the education of the ignorant, and for the relief of the sick and needy.

It has given men a clearer knowledge of God and of morality and of a future state. Hence it comes to pass that the far greater part of Christians, when they do amiss, sin against conscience, and feel many restraints and checks, by which they are at least kept from some crimes which they else would have committed, and incited to do some good actions which they would not have performed.

Vix crediderim Romanos eâ pœnâ affecisse mulieres adulteras, &c.

Ordered that all who in their infancy had been sold for slaves should be set at liberty, many of whom belonged to the Emperor.

Honorius made a very merciful law in favour of prisoners.

These laws may be seen in the *Theodosian Code*.

* I find in profane history something like charity-schools, or a provision made for poor children by Emperors or other persons of distinction, or by the public; by Nerva, [*Aurel. Victor*] by Trajan, [*Plin. Paneg. Dio LXVIII. 771.*] by Adrian, [*Spartian. in Hist. Aug.*] by T. Antoninus, [*Capitolin. in Hist. Aug.*] by Pliny the younger, perhaps, [*Epist. I. 8. VII. 18.*] *Constantine*, who was a very generous prince, did as much, and more. *Cod. Theodos. L. II. t. 27. l. 1.*

Several

Several of these benefits are more evidently visible in some Christian * countries than in others, but they are to be found in some measure in all nations where the Gospel is received.

The Gospel for several ages after its establishment was of some † benefit even to those who received it not; for the *Pagan* philosophers ‡ and learned men in those times were improved in their notions of morality and religion; for which we can account no way so probably as from their intercourse and conversation and debates with Christians.

The Gospel has likewise been in some measure serviceable to those great and populous nations who are Mohammedans; for their religion, false and foolish as it is, § bor-

ROWS

* The Church of Christ here upon earth, in a true sense, is the whole number of all those in all places, who believe in Christ, and endeavour to know his will and obey his laws. Every person who is in such a disposition of mind, is a member of the universal Church, and as such, a Christian.

† *Whitb.* on 1 *Cor.* xv. 44.

‡ See the Disc. on the Gospel as it is grace and truth.

§ Justice requires of us to give every one his due, and ἀρετὴν ἀντιτά, to commend what is commendable, wherefo-

rows several things from *Judaism* and Christianity; it teaches the belief of one God maker of heaven and earth, and of a providence, and of a future state. Therefore it is better than *Epicurean* notions of the mortality of the soul, and of a God who takes no care of the world, it is better than *Pagan*

ever we find it. It should be acknowledged that the false Prophet, in his *Coran*, requires the belief of one God, trust in him, frequent prayer and fasting, alms-giving even to strangers, keeping of covenants, justice in dealings, patience in adversity, to honour father and mother, and to maintain them if they are old and poor; that he forbids usury, bearing false witness, profane swearing by the name of God, and the murdering of infants which had been common in *Arabia*.

But Mohammedism is a religion destitute of all proper evidence, and liable to insuperable objections.

Mohammed has sufficiently confuted himself by striking out some passages of the *Coran*, upon second thoughts, and when his exigences required it, saying, *In the name of God, whatever verse we shall abrogate, &c.* ch. II. p. 14. and ch. XVI. p. 223. *Sale's* Edit.

The 23d chapter shews him to be an impostor.

His invention was very poor and narrow. If the repetitions were blotted out, not more than a fourth part of his book would be left.

In some passages of the *Coran* he denies a possibility of salvation to those who reject it; in other places he is thought by some to have left room for virtuous men who believed a God and a future state. See ch. II. p. 8. and the notes; and *Fabricius* *Luc. Evang.* p. 491.

idolatry,

idolatry, than the worship of Dæmons, of false Gods, of stocks and stones.

4. It is prophesied of Christ that he should be a conqueror, a prosperous and victorious king, who should subdue all his enemies. To him, as he is a king, belongs the right of judging and punishing those who rebel against him, and refuse to submit to him. Kings in ancient times were also judges, and in Scripture are called judges of the earth. And of the Messias it is said, that he should judge with righteousness, that he should smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and slay the wicked, that his enemies should lick the dust, that he should break in pieces the oppressor, that kings should perish, if he was angry with them, and that he should smite in sunder their heads over divers countries ; and many like acts of power are ascribed to him. In the New Testament also our Saviour, under some parables, represents himself as a king, who should destroy his enemies, and declares that all judgment is committed to him by his Father.

Many of these acts of regal authority have had their signal completion; for,

K 4

First,

First; Christ punished *Judæa* with utter desolation. His rebellious subjects there, who would not that he should reign over them, were given up to a reprobate mind, to blindness and madness, and by their own outrageous iniquity, by civil discord, by famine, by war with the *Romans*, suffered * calamities not to be equalled in the † history of any other people; their city and temple were destroyed, and those of them who survived were scattered into all lands.

After this, the *Jews* of *Libya*, *Ægypt*, *Cyprus*, and *Mesopotamia* rebelled, and slew an innumerable multitude of people, for which they were severely punished by *Trajan*.

After this, when † the *Jews* began to gather and to settle once again in *Jerusalem*, they drew upon themselves the arms of the

* Before this, in the time of *Caius*, a slaughter was made of the *Jews* in *Ægypt*, *Mesopotamia*, *Babylon*, *Syria*, and *Seleucia*, which was, says *Josephus*, φόνος πολὺς, καὶ ὁπθίσθη ἕκιστα ἰσομενέοντες πείθεσθαι, a greater destruction than any that was ever before recorded of them. *Ant.* XVIII. 9.

† These calamities were not confined to *Palæstine*, but reached them in all places where they dwelt, as in *Ægypt*, *Syria*, &c.

‡ *Eusebius* E. H. IV. 2. 6. & *Valesius*; & *Fabric.* *Lue.* *Evang.* p. 124; &c.

Emperor

Emperor *Adrian*, and, if we may believe * their own writers, they suffered calamities not less severe, and extensive than the former.

In the time of *Constantius* they † rebelled again, and *Gallus* slew many thousands of them, not sparing even the children, and burnt *Diocæsarea*, *Tiberias*, *Diospolis*, and other towns of the *Jews*.

After this the Emperor *Julian*, in hatred to the Christian religion, would have settled them in *Jerusalem*, and restored to them their temple; but all his attempts were frustrated in a miraculous manner by Divine Providence.

After this, in later times, Christian princes entertained a design to deliver the holy land from the infidels, and many attempts of that kind were made, which God would not suffer to prosper; but *Judæa* lies to this day barren, uncultivated, thinly inhabited, a memorable and dreadful example of Divine justice.

Secondly, it has been a common opinion that our Saviour punished the *Roman Em-*

* *Buxtorf* in vocibus *Bitter*, *Barchoziba*.

† *Hieron.* in *Chron. ann.* 355. *Socrat. Hist. Eccl.* II. 33. *Sozom.* IV. 7.

pire, that great adversary and oppressor of Christianity, that cruel persecutor of his Church, that empire of Satan. Thus much is certain, that most of the persecuting Emperors were cut off one after another in a * very remarkable manner, and that the Empire was visited with plague and famine, with civil wars, with inundations of savage and barbarous people, *Persians, Goths, Germans, Scythians, &c.* till all *Italy* and † *Rome* itself fell into their hands and was plundered by them.

* See Grotius *Append. de Antichr.* p. 499. and the writer *de Mortib. Persecut.*

† However it must be confessed that *Rome* at that time was Christian, and under Christian Emperors. *Jos. Mede* has taken notice of this, and says; *Although the Roman Emperors were now become Christians, yet would not God forget their former slaughters of his servants, but require their blood at the hand of that empire.* p. 919. *Nec est*, says Grotius, *quod quisquam opponat tunc Romam fuisse Christianam. Contrà enim verum est, etiam postquam Imperatores facti erant Christiani, Romæ mansisse idololatriam tum in Senatu, tum in plebe.* ad *Apocal.* XVII. 16. See also *Hammond* there, and Grotius *Append. de Antichr.* p. 501.

Add to these the following observation; *Scribere enim disposui — quomodo et per quos Christi Ecclesia nata sit et adulta, persecutionibus creverit, — et postquam ad Christianos principes vexerit, potentiâ quidem et divitiis major, virtutibus minor facta sit.* Hieronymus in *vitâ S. Malchi.*

These

These acts of regal authority Christ has executed. Some remain, which in their due season will be accomplished; for it is generally supposed that the prophets speak of a time when the *Jews* shall be converted, and the fulness of the *Gentiles* shall flow into the Church, and the kingdoms of the world shall be the kingdoms of Christ, when the Gospel shall be farther spread, and better understood, and more religiously observed than it is at present. And without question, these great events will be attended with as great and conspicuous acts of Christ's royal power and majesty.

But the most illustrious act of royal authority which Christ will exercise, will be at the end of all things, when he will judge the world in the truest and largest sense, when this sinful earth, the seat of folly and iniquity, shall be set on fire and consume away before his presence, when he will pass sentence on the evil Angels, when he will raise up the dead, and distribute rewards and punishments to all, proportionably to their behaviour in the days of their mortality.

Thus

Thus are we come to the most glorious part of Christ's reign, and also to the conclusion of it. It is said, by the Angel, that he should reign for ever, and of his kingdom there should be no end; and the Angel's words are taken from *Isaiab*, who prophesying of the Messias, says; *Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever.* Daniel speaks in the same manner: *His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.* And again: *The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and it shall stand for ever.* In this also Christ's kingdom was to differ from all other kingdoms, from all the preceding human monarchies, which when they had arrived to their full strength and glory, had the same fate which attends human bodies, and either were quickly destroyed by violent causes, or insensibly decayed and moulder'd away, so that no tokens of them would have remained, if History had not written their epitaph, and told

told us where they lay, and what they had been.

Not such was to be the fate of Christ's kingdom, to which the prophets, with one voice, have promised an eternal duration.

Yet St. *Paul* in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, says that Christ's kingdom shall have an end. To reconcile which with the prophecies, we must observe that the expressions, * *everlasting, for ever, and without end*, are used by sacred, as well as prophane authors, in different senses, according to the subject to which they are applied. When therefore it is said that Christ shall reign for ever, † the meaning seems to be that he shall reign as long as the world lasts; when it is said that of his kingdom there shall be no end, the meaning is that it shall not pass away like other kingdoms,

* See *Vitrina* in *Isai*. Vol. II. p. 220. *Grotius* de Ver. R. C. V. 7. *Blackwall* Sacr. Clafs. p. 149. *Clarke* Serm. IV. Vol. I. The comparative degree ἀθανατώτερος is used by *Plato* in his *Phædo*, and *Sympos*.

† In like manner it is said of Christ, that he is a *Priest for ever* and *hath an unchangeable priesthood*, *Hebr.* vii. that is, he is a priest, as long as the office can subsist, as long as there are men for whom he may intercede, and whom he may reconcile to God, as long as the world endures.

and

and that there shall be no end of it, till the consummation of all things.

Then cometh the end, says St. Paul; when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy which shall be destroyed is death. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

Christ will then have no more enemies to subdue, when death shall be destroyed, and sin shall receive its due correction: he will have no more occasion to protect and to reward his servants, when he has raised them up to eternal life, and given them seats in his kingdom of heaven. * These acts therefore of regal authority he can exercise no longer.

But since Christ is to all his faithful servants, not only a creator, but a guide and a teacher, a saviour and a mediator, a king and a judge, the benefits received from these relations which Christ bears to them are of an

* See *Whitby* on II. *Tim.* iv. 1.

endless nature; and an eternal obligation will lie upon them to offer up to him the just returns of love and gratitude, of reverence and adoration, through all ages; according to those forms of thanksgiving in the Revelation. *Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

—*Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

WE are taught to pray daily that the kingdom of God, or of Christ may come; in which words we pray that the Gospel of Christ may flourish more and more, and that the number of his servants may increase continually. But to pray for this is not enough; we cannot indeed pray for it with any sincerity, unless we use our best endeavours to accomplish these pious wishes.

Setting aside the injudicious, inhuman, and infamous methods, by which too many have pretended to do God service, we shall find that there remain only the following ways

ways by which we may promote the enlargement of our Lord's kingdom; and they are ways in which every Christian, more or less, is capable of performing his part.

First, an endeavour to understand the Gospel, that we may be able to teach those who are committed to our care and placed under our authority; to remove the doubts of the unstable; to dispel the errors of the mistaken; and to answer the objections of adversaries.

Secondly, a readiness to countenance and assist any attempt which is made to propagate the Gospel, or to instruct the young, the poor, and the ignorant, when we have reason to hope that they shall be instructed in the religion of Christ, not in fanaticism and enthusiasm.

Thirdly, a disposition to think and speak favourably of those who believe in the same Lord and Master with us, though their belief be not exactly conformable to ours, especially when they think and speak favourably of us.

Fourthly, rational notions of the Gospel, which will teach us to represent it as a religion

gion in which all things * necessary to be believed or done are delivered with sufficient clearness, as a religion which consists principally in purity of heart, in morality, in goodness, in righteousness, in the love of God and of mankind, as a religion in which charity takes the upper hand of faith, and hope and knowledge, and is the most excellent of all accomplishments.

Lastly, a life conformable to the religion which we profess, which would do more towards recommending our Christian faith to the bulk of mankind, than all that we can

* Πάντα γὰρ ἀναγκαῖα δῆλα. *Chrysost.* Hom. 36. in I. ad Cor.

Non multum tibi nocebit transisse quæ nec licet scire, nec prodest. Involuta veritas in alto latet. Nec de malignitate Naturæ queri possumus: quia nullius rei difficilis inventio est, nisi cujus hic unus inventæ fructus est, invenisse. Quicquid nos meliores beatosque facturum est, aut in aperto, aut in proximo posuit. *Seneca de Benef. VII. 1.*

Ne curiosus quære causas omnium,
Quæcunque libris vis Prophetarum indidit
Afflata cœlo, plena veraci Deo:
Nec operta sacri supparo silentii
Irrumpere aude, sed prudenter præteri.
Nescire velle, quæ Magister optimus
Docere non vult, erudita inscitia est.
Jos. Scaliger.

See *Whitby* on *Acts* viii. 21. *Tit.* i. 2:

say in behalf of it. The want of this has been an impediment to the progress of Christianity, a scandal and a stumbling-block in the way of unbelievers.

They object to us that since we say and do not, either our religion is impracticable, or we believe nothing of it, and by our behaviour acknowledge it to be false.

To which we might make more than one reply;

We might say that the heart and the understanding of man are frequently at variance, that he often acts contrary to his judgment and conscience; and therefore it must not be hastily concluded that he rejects the doctrines which he does not practise.

We might say that every age which has pass'd since our Saviour's time, especially the earliest ages of the Church, has afforded eminent examples of Christian piety.

We might say that religion is what it is in itself; must stand, if it stands, by its own intrinsic merit, and by the evidence which accompanies it; that its truth and value is no more lessened by the ill use which men
make

make of it, than the sun ceases to shine when we shut our eyes to his beams.

We might say that Christianity, though it has not all the happy effects which were to be wished, yet prevents and restrains many evils, and is the cause of much good in the world, as we have already shewed in several instances.

But the best answer of all would be to forsake our sins and amend our ways; and then our good actions would speak for us, and wipe off this imputation cast upon our faith and our religion.

It was a singular honour and advantage to the cause of Christianity that its * ancient Writers, in their apologies for it, could address themselves to the *Romans* in such words as these; We are grown so many in number, that if we were only to withdraw our selves from your dominions, we should ruin you, you could not subsist without us. Yet is our innocence as remarkable as our increase. Your jayls swarm with criminals of your own religion: but you shall not find there one Christian, unless he be there be-

* Tertullian, Minucius Felix, &c.

cause he is Christian, and purely on account of his faith.

Every one who believes the Gospel, should consider himself as a subject of Christ's kingdom, and remember that he is not admitted into it to provide only for his own future welfare, and to neglect the interest of the society to which he belongs. He should account it his duty, his honour, and his happiness, to increase the number of his fellow-subjects; and to this purpose he should be ready to employ his reputation, his learning, his abilities, his authority, and his fortunes. To turn men from sin to righteousness, and to enlarge the kingdom of God upon earth, is an office of such dignity and importance, that our Lord descended from heaven to execute it; and blessed is that servant, whom, when he cometh, he shall find to be, or to have been so occupied.

IV.

The fitness of the time when Christ came into the world.

THERE are many prophecies in the Old Testament relating to the Messias, some of which point out a certain time in which he should appear.

It was foretold by * *Haggai* and by *Malachi* that he should come whilst the temple stood. It was foretold by *Daniel* that the kingdom of the Messias should be set up in the time of the fourth kingdom, which was

* ii. 9.

It may be objected that Christ came not whilst the second temple stood, but after the third temple had been built by *Herod*, and that consequently the prophecy of *Haggai* was not accomplished in him. But the *Jews* always accounted *Herod's* temple as the second temple, and always called it so; and what *Herod* did, might well be deemed rather a repairing and improving of the second temple, than the building of a third; because the daily sacrifice and the service of the temple never ceased during the work, nor was it taken down all at once. See the Commentators on *Josephus* Ant. XV. 11. Sect. 2. 3. and *Grotius* on *Matt.* xxiv. 1. and on *Malach.* iii. 1. and *Le Clerc* Hist. Eccl. p. 197.

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the *Roman* Empire, and that he should appear about four hundred and ninety years after the rebuilding of *Jerusalem*.

These prophecies were accomplished in our Saviour, who honoured the temple with his presence, after whose death and according to whose prediction that temple was entirely destroyed, the *Jewish* Government was dissolved, and a dispersion of that people ensued which still continues.

At the time of his appearance there was a general expectation amongst the *Jews* of a *Messias*. In the New Testament mention is made of persons who waited for the consolation of *Israel*, who looked for redemption in *Jerusalem*, who thought that the kingdom of God, or of the *Messias*, should immediately appear. We find that it was the judgment of the learned also, of the chief priests and scribes. When *John* the Baptist entered into his ministry, the *Jews* sent priests and Levites to ask him whether he were the Christ.

Herod was alarmed * at the coming of the wise men, he enquired of the learned *Jews*

* *St. Matthew* says that at the birth of *Jesus*, *Herod* was troubled, *ἡ ἀρχὴ*, and all *Jerusalem* with him, ii. 3. To which

Jews where Christ should be born, and hearing that it should be at *Bethlehem*, he destroyed all the male children there under

a

which the Author of the *Scheme of Lit. Propb.* objects; How could all *Jerusalem* be troubled to hear their *Messiah*, or deliverer was born; when the *Jews* at all times hoped and desired to see him? &c. p. 35.

Herod and his friends, and all the irreligious *Jews*, when they heard that the *Messias* was come, ἐλαγχθισαν, were moved, with grief and fear. The rest of the *Jews*, who wished for the *Messias*, ἐλαγχθισαν, were moved with an anxiety made up of hopes, and fears, and uncertainty, and expectation. All therefore were put into a commotion, and had their apprehensions and uneasiness, but in some they were mixed with hope and joy.

Phædo, in the Dialogue of *Plato* which bears his name, thus describes the painful pleasure which he felt whilst he was conversing with *Socrates* for the last time — ὅλλ' ὅτεχνῶς ἀτοπὸν ἵ μοι πάθῃ παρῆν, καὶ ἵς ἀήθης κερῶσις ἀπό ἵ τῆς ἡδονῆς συγκεκραμένη ὁμῶς καὶ τῆς λύπης, ἐνδυμεμένῳ ὅτῃ ἀνίστα ἐκείνῳ ἔμελλε τελευτᾶν. καὶ πάντες οἱ παρόντες χερδὸν ἵ ἔτω διεκείμεθα, — καὶ αὐτὸς ἔγωγε ἑτεταράγμην, καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι. Sed affectus quidam plane mirus, atque insolita voluptatis simul et doloris permixtio me invaserat considerantem illi paullo post moriendum esse. Et quicumque aderamus similiter ferme affecti eramus, — atque ipse alique perturbati eramus.

Vix sum apud me, ita animus commotust metu,

Spe, gaudio, mirando hoc tanto tam repentino bono.

Terent. Andr. V. 4.

— animo spem turbidus hausit inanem.

Virgil Æn. X. 648.

a certain age, hoping to cut off the *Messias*. He is charged by * some, but it seems to be a mistake, with burning the genealogies of all the *Jewish* families, that the lineage of *David*, from whom the *Messias* was to spring, might be unknown; and it has been said that he undertook to rebuild the temple, because it was thought that the *Messias* would perform that work.

A great number of impostors, false Christs and false prophets, taking advantage of this prevailing opinion, endeavoured to impose upon the *Jews*. Many of these deceivers appeared from the days of *Herod* the great to the destruction of *Jerusalem*.

Amongst † the *Romans* also, and in the Eastern parts of the world there was an opinion that some extraordinary person should arise and rule the earth, which

*Eux? recenti mens trepidat metu,
Plenoque Bacchi pectore turbidum
Latatur.*

Horat. Carm. II. 19.

Spesque, audaxque una metus, et fiducia pallens.

Statius Theb. VI. 393.

&c. &c. &c.

* Eusebius E. H. 1. 7.

† Josephus Bell. Jud. VI. 5. Tacitus. Suetonius.

earth,

must have come in all probability from the *Jews*.

The *Samaritans* hated the *Jews* so much that they cannot well be thought to have borrowed the hopes of a *Messias* from that nation. That they entertained such hopes we read in the New Testament; which is also confirmed by the attempts of *Simon Magus*, and other *Samaritan* impostors.

Concerning the fitness of the time when Christ came into the world, the holy Scriptures say little; and we can only offer conjectures, which ought to have no more of authority than they are found upon examination to have of probability.

1. Our Lord came when men had been prepared by a long series of prophecies to expect and receive him.

The promises of a *Messias* were at first more obscure, and as the time of his coming drew near, more plain; and during the long interval between *Adam* and *Malachi*, different predictions concerning the person and the offices and the sufferings and the prosperity of the *Messias* were delivered, which contained

contained many things seemingly irreconcilable, and yet accomplished in Christ.

As the knowledge of these predictions was in a manner confined to the *Jewish* nation, it pleased God to make their religion * more known when the time of Christ's appearing drew near. Before his coming the Old Testament was translated into the *Greek* language, a language † then, and long afterwards, the most universally understood, whereby the ‡ *Gentiles* had access

* *Eusebius* endeavours to prove that the *Gentiles* were indebted to the *Jews* on many accounts, *Eccl. Hist.* I. 2. & *Præp. Ev.*

† It is certain that the *Romans* took pains to propagate their language, and to establish its superior dignity, of which good proofs are collected by *Bayle, Diction.* CLAUDE, p. 897. But in the time of Christ and his Apostles, *Greek* was really the universal language. The New Testament is a proof it, if proof were wanting; and this is one reason, amongst others, which may be given why *St. Matthew* probably wrote his Gospel in *Greek*. The Epistle to the *Hebrews* was composed in *Greek*, though it was written to *Jews* dwelling in *Judæa* and *Palæstine*. *Græca leguntur in omnibus fere gentibus: Latina suis finibus, exiguis sand, continentur.* *Cicero Orat. pro Arch.* *Quamdiu steterit aut Latine linguæ potentia, aut Græcæ gratia.* *Seneca Conf. ad Polyb.* 21.

‡ But it must be owned that the Scriptures, even after this translation, were little known to many of the *Gentiles*

cess to sacred history and to the prophetic writings ; and it appears from the books of the New Testament, and from other writers, that many proselytes had learned of the *Jews* to worship one God and to obey the moral parts of the Law of *Moses*, and that such persons were to be found in most nations of the known world.

2, Christ came when the *Jews* wanted the Messias as an instructor.

The *Jews*, who from the time of *Moses* to *Malachi* were seldom without a prophet, had none, as far as we can find, from the days of *Malachi* to the coming of our Saviour. The prophets used to be sent to them to reprove them for their faults, to require from them an observance of the laws of *Moses*, and to foretel the Messias: but the writings of the prophets were in their hands, and constantly read; and served for these purposes as much as any new messenger could have served, unless he had been one of superior authority to his predecessors. The

titles for a considerable time. *Greek* and *Roman* historians, as *Diodorus Siculus*, *Trogus Pompeius* who is abridged by *Justin*, *Strabo*, *Tacitus*, and others seem to have been ignorant of *Jewish* Antiquities.

Jews

Jews wanted no * new prophecies concerning the *Messias*; they saw him promised, as they thought, clearly in many places of the sacred Books. There was as little occasion for one who should press upon them an adherence to the ritual Law; they observed it carefully, or rather superstitiously: but of two things they particularly stood in need, first, of instruction in the true nature of the ceremonial law; secondly, of receiving fuller assurances of a future state. The ceremonial law was given to the *Jews*, partly in condescension to their temper and capacities, and partly to keep them separated from the vices and idolatries of the Heathen. But their wrong opinions of it were attended with bad consequences: they esteemed it at too high a rate; they despised the *Gentiles*, and thought them excluded, in a great measure, from the favour of God, not so much for their vices, as because they were legally impure, and observed not the Mosaic rites; and consequently they entertained unsuitable notions of God and of morality. But the time was now approaching when their ceremonial law would be almost impracticable,

* See *Le Clerc de l'Incred.* P. II. c. 7.

when

when the *Romans* would deprive them of those small remains of liberty which they possessed, would destroy their temple, drive them out of their land, and disperse them into all nations. It was therefore necessary that they should be taught that their ceremonies were no longer of importance, that God was no respecter of persons, and that all good men were his children, that a *Jew* might perform his duty in another country as well as in *Judæa*, that he might converse indifferently and freely with all the sober and virtuous, that he ought to think himself a citizen of the world, account every man his * neighbour, and love him as such.

The doctrine of a future state had not been delivered in a full, clear, and satisfactory manner in the Law or in the prophets. The *Sadducees* rejected it, supposing it not to

* The doctrine of universal love and charity was very necessary to be inculcated to *Jews* and *Gentiles*. Many *Pagans* of great renown had carried the love of their country to a vitious excess, and had not scrupled to injure and oppress other nations that they might advance the power and glory of their own. The *Romans* had not been free from this fault; the *Lacedæmonians* had been scandalously guilty of it. See *Plutarch* in *Agésil.* et *Alcibiad.* *Thucydides* L. V. and *Grotius* de Jure B. *Proleg.* 3. 23. 24.

be contained in the sacred books; and the *Pharisees* and * *Essenes* who admitted it, founded their belief upon consequences drawn from some expressions in Scripture, upon tradition, and upon such arguments as their reason suggested, and had mixed together some true and some false notions about it. The express promises made in the law to the righteous were of temporal good things, and these promises began to be less and less fulfilled, to the disappointment of many pious persons who knew not how to reconcile these ways of providence with the holy Scriptures. It was therefore expedient that they should be taught by the *Messias*, that as the *Jewish* commonwealth with its political and ceremonial laws would soon cease, God interposed no longer in their behalf, but invited the *Jews* and the rest of mankind to a more sublime and spiritual religion, and would bestow upon his servants a recompense infinitely surpassing all that this unhappy world can bestow.

3. About the time of Christ's coming, religion and morality were universally cor-

* *Essenes & Therapeutæ* ; men who seem to have been but one remove from those, who, by the *Roman* laws, were *ad agnatos et gentiles deducendi*.

rupted and greatly wanted reformation. The *Jewish* Church was overrun with error and superstition: the precepts of God, and the rules of equity and common sense gave place to doctrines of men, to traditions contrary to them both. The most considerable and the most learned were those who were the most depraved in their opinions, and in their practice, and they who should have taught the truth to others were blind guides deluding those who relied upon them.

We may judge of the state of the *Gentile* world at that time by the state of that considerable part of it which belonged to the *Roman* Empire. Public spirit, a love of their country, disinterestedness, frugality, sobriety, a desire of reputation, and a contempt of wealth had contributed to make the *Romans* great; but their successes proved their undoing, and their national good qualities forsook them: their power still continued, nor could it be soon destroyed, but the remains of virtue and their liberty fell together: they learned the vices of those whom they had conquered, and taught them theirs in exchange. Such was the condition of the *Gentile* world when our
 Lord

Lord sent forth his Apostles to instruct and reform them.

4. Though the Heathen were then greatly corrupted in their lives, yet knowledge was considerably increased, and upon this account it was a proper season for our Lord to appear. Truth and learning are friends; error and imposture flourish under the protection of Ignorance. When the Gospel was offered to mankind, the teachers of it had adversaries who wanted neither inclination nor abilities to oppose it. To make its way at such a time, and to bring over not only the lower sort of people, but also some of the learned who turned its own weapons against *Paganism*, this was an honour to the Christian religion, and one proof of its truth.

5. At the time when our Lord came, the insufficiency of the *Jewish* religion, of natural religion, of ancient tradition, and of philosophy fully appeared.

The *Jewish* * religion was never designed to be universal or perpetual; it had also

* Eusebius observes ὅτι Μωσέως νόμος μόνῳ Ἰσραὴλ ἔσται, καὶ τέτω ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκείας γῆς οἰκῆν ἀποδέδεικται, καὶ ὅτι διὰ τῆτο ἑτέρῃ Περιήγεται, καὶ ἑτέρῃ νόμῳ περὶ δέσσει Demonstr. Ev. I. 1.

other defects which appeared the plainer when it was compared with the Christian religion.

The author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* shews at large that the Christian institution ought to take place of the *Mosaic*, upon account of the comparative weakness and unprofitableness of the first covenant.

The insufficiency of the *Jewish* revelation appeared also in some measure from that general corruption which had overrun it, of which mention has been already made.

Concerning the insufficiency of natural religion we may observe, that since natural religion consists of those duties which human reason can discover, reason and natural religion may here be considered as one and the same thing. There have been many disputes about the sufficiency or insufficiency of human reason. Human reason seems to have its sufficiency in one sense, and its insufficiency in another. The sufficiency of human reason is this, that every man may find out as much as God requires from *him*. Men according to the place and age in which they live, the opportunities and the natural abilities conferred upon them, must differ

M

extremely

extremely in knowledge; but every one may know all that God expects of him, which is, that he should act according to his knowledge, and that he should know concerning his duty what he can learn by informing himself to the best of his power.

The insufficiency of human reason or natural religion consisted in this: Religion was so corrupted by fables and forgeries, and so obscured by the doubts and disputes of the learned, that it lay buried under falshood and uncertainty, and was not to be retrieved without great difficulty.

And, if we may judge of the powers of reason by the discoveries of this kind which reason has ever made, we shall find that though several persons determined justly on several moral subjects, yet there was not one of them who did not fall into some mistakes in matters of morality and of religion.

Concerning the insufficiency of tradition, we may observe that religion, as it stood in the heathen world, was not barely the result of reasoning; but that a considerable part of it was made up of truths received by tradition from the remotest antiquity. Before learning flourished, before the arts of disputing

ting were cultivated, the general opinion was that one God and Father of all had formed the universe, and that the soul subsisted after it had left the body, and was happy or unhappy according to its past behaviour. These notions were so early that the origin of them could never be discovered. But as the *Gentiles* were at a loss to know whence these traditions arose, so neither did they receive them pure and unmixed, nor could they restore them to their natural simplicity; by length of time they were debased, darkened with lies and fables, and therefore grew insufficient for religious purposes, and became weak incitements to virtue.

When natural religion and tradition were thus corrupted, there remained only one human method of retrieving them, and that was philosophy. This method had been tried, and was found deficient.

For the philosophers themselves were not free from gross mistakes, from many defects both in principles * and practice. Besides,
the

* *Grotius* on *Rom.* i. 32. mentions the pernicious doctrines of some philosophers. Some of them had loose notions
M 2 concerning

the corruption was too general to be cured by philosophy which was not calculated for the benefit of the common people, nor * understood by them. Add to this, that those learned moralists used to recommend virtue from its natural beauty and decency, † and to insist chiefly on this motive, which though it may weigh much with some well disposed minds, yet must have little influence upon the bulk of mankind, who will not be moved, unless their fears or their hopes be strongly affected.

The philosophers by their endless ‡ disputes and divisions darkened many truths, concerning the lawfulness of lying, and of fornication. *Whitby* on *Ephes.* iv. 25. v. 6. *Theff.* i. iv. 5. *Grotius* on *Acts* xv. 20. As to practice, see what *Cicero* says of them, *Tusc. Disp.* II. 4. and the writer of the *Clement. Homil.* V. 18. and *Grotius* de Ver. R. C. II. 18. and *Whitby* on *Theff.* i. ii. 9.

* *Horace* tells us that his father used to say to him ;

— *Sapiens vitatu quidque petitu*

Sit melius, causas reddet tibi : mihi satis est, si

Traditum ab antiquis morem servare, tuamque

Dum custodis eges, vitam famamque tueri

Incolumem possim. *Serm.* I. 4.

The reasonings of the Philosophers were jargon to this plain honest man ; but he thought right to follow whatsoever things were of good report.

† See *Miscell. Observ.* Vol. I. p. 33.

‡ *Nimium altercando veritas amittitur*

In *Publii Syri Sentent.*

and

and taught nothing so effectually as doubt and suspense. Instead of opposing the vulgar superstitions, they often complied with them, and outwardly conformed to the established religions. These and other disadvantages under which philosophy laboured, shew that it had little effect towards a reformation of sentiments and manners. What it could do, it had done before the coming of Christ. It had been tried, and it had been found insufficient.

6. Lastly, when our Lord came, * the most civilized and the most populous parts of *Europe* and *Asia* were under one government, and ruled by common laws which in the main were just and good, the times were more quiet and happy than they had been, commerce flourished, and travelling was made easy and safe; and this state of things contributed much to the speedy propagation of the Gospel.

* Ἀνέβηκε γὰρ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτῆς δικαιοσύνη, καὶ πληθὺν εἰρήνης γέγονεν, ἀρξάμενον ἀπὸ τῆς γενέσεως αὐτῆς, ἐν ἡμετέροις ἡμέραις τῆς Θεοῦ τῆς διδασκαλίας αὐτῆς τὰ ἔθνη, ἵνα ὅπως ἐνα γένῃται τῶν Ῥωμαίων βασιλεία· καὶ μὴ, διὰ τὸ πρὸ οὗτοι τῶν πολλῶν βασιλείων ἁμικλον τῶν ἐθνῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλα, χαλεπώτερον γένῃται τοῖς ἀποστόλοις τὸ Ἰησοῦ τὸ ποιῆσαι ὅπερ προσέταξεν αὐτοῖς. *Origen. contr. Cels. II. p. 79*

V.

The testimony of John the Baptist.

OUR Saviour in his discourses with the Jews and with his disciples made use of four proofs, to shew that he was sent from God.

The first, upon which he plainly lays the greatest stress, was taken from the miracles which he wrought. *The works which I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not believed.*

The second was taken from the prophecies which were fulfilled in him. * *If ye had believed Moses, ye would have believed me,*

* Our Saviour and his Apostles often assure us that all the prophets, whose writings are contained in the Old Testament, have spoken of the coming of the Messiah; and upon this, though not upon this either singly or chiefly, is founded the truth of our religion; for it stands in need of no proofs of its divinity from the Old Testament, which seems to receive

me, for he wrote of me. Search the Scriptures — for they testify of me.

The

ceive more confirmation from the Gospel, than the Gospel receives thence.

The prophecies in general were so delivered that they should not be understood till the event explained them, for which many reasons might be assigned. Hence it comes to pass that after they have been all fulfilled in Christ, and by being compared together have given much light and strength to each other, still many of them, considered by themselves, are not so irresistibly evident as to force an assent from stubborn minds, and room is left for contradiction, doubt or cavil. Some of them are more obscure and ambiguous, some more full and clear. It is reasonable to suppose that as the time of Christ's coming drew nearer, the predictions concerning him should be more distinct and plain; and so indeed they are.

Grotius allows that there are texts in the Prophets who lived after the captivity, which relate directly and solely to Jesus Christ. His acknowledgment of this is of the more weight, because he cannot be charged with wresting the Scriptures to that purpose, and has been blamed for explaining away some prophecies which Christians apply to Christ. *Christus*, says he, *ut jam appropinquans, apertius a Prophetis indicatus est.* Hebr. viii. 8.

That Christ was foretold by the prophets, may be shewed, I think, without an accurate discussion of single texts.

There are it may be a hundred different passages in the Old Testament relating to some person, whosoever he be, one or more, and to certain considerable changes which should happen in the world. Christians say that they relate to Christ, and some of them are produced in these Discourses. He who would see more, may consult *Fabricius*

The third was his foreknowledge of future events. *Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.*

The fourth was the testimony of *John the Baptist*, concerning which our Saviour thus reasons with the *Jews*: *If I bear witness of my self, if I produce no proof of my divine mission besides a bare affirmation of it, my witness is not true, and I deserve to be rejected.*

There is another that beareth witness of me, namely *John the Baptist*; and that he

De Ver. Chr. Rel. p. 569. & *Huet Dem. Ev. Prop. VII.* History, sacred and profane, ancient and modern, will furnish us with a variety of heroes, kings, warriors, philosophers, and illustrious persons. If we endeavour to apply these passages in the Old Testament to any one of these great men, for example, to *Judas Maccabæus*, to *Confucius*, to *Socrates*, to *Solon*, to *Numa*, to *Scipio Africanus*, to *Augustus Cæsar*, &c. we immediately see that it is a vain attempt, that three fourths of them are no ways suitable to his character and his deeds, and that it is easy to select many single ones amongst them which cannot possibly be adapted to him. If we apply them to *Christ* and to the religion established by him, a surprising correspondence immediately appears.

To ascribe these coincidences to chance, it is to give a very poor and unsatisfactory account of them. He who can believe that chance produced them, ought not to object credulity to Christians.

testified

testified of me ye know; for, *Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness of the truth. But I receive not testimony from man.* I stand in no need of the witness of *John*, or of any other man.

I put you in mind of it, because, *He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoyce in his light.* You used to acknowledge him to be a prophet and a righteous man; and therefore I insist upon his testimony, hoping that it may have some good effect upon you.

But I have greater witness than that of John, for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

This proof taken from the testimony of *John*, though our Lord speaks, in a manner, slightingly of it, when he compares it to the proof drawn from his own miracles, yet was an argument of particular force to the *Jews*, and could not fail to convince or to confound them: for as we read in another place, they durst not openly speak against *John*, because the people generally had him in esteem, and thought him a prophet. A
proof

proof therefore from his testimony would either remove their doubts, or reduce them to silence.

But that the argument, considered in it self, is satisfactory, I shall endeavour to shew in the following manner.

I. I will lay before you the testimony which *John* bare of Jesus Christ.

II. I will give you some account of the life and character of *John*.

III. I will thence shew that he is an unexceptionable witness,

IV. I will endeavour to remove an objection which may be made to his testimony.

I. I will lay before you the testimony which *John* bare of Jesus Christ.

When *John* baptized the people, he exhorted them at the same time to believe in one who should come after him, whose servant or disciple he was not worthy to be; he told them that this person should baptize them with the holy Ghost and with fire; which prediction was first accomplished at Pentecost, when Christ sent the holy Ghost on his disciples.

When

When Jesus came to be baptized, *John* knew him, and declined to perform that office, alledging that it became not so considerable a person to receive baptism from him. After Christ was baptized, the holy Ghost descended upon him, and God by a voice from heaven declared him to be his beloved Son. This *John* saw and testified, and added that God had revealed to him that this was he who should baptize with the holy Ghost.

When the priests and *Levites* came to ask *John* who he was, he declared that he was not the Messias, but his forerunner, and the person foretold by *Isaias*; and he told them that the Messias was at hand, and would soon manifest himself.

After this *John* took all opportunities of making Jesus known to his own disciples and to the *Jews*. He calls him *the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world*: He says of him; *This is he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me*; that is, though he was born after me, and enters into his office after me, yet he is before me both in dignity and time.

After-

Afterwards, when Jesus was baptizing the *Jews* by his disciples, and many resorted to him, the disciples of *John*, jealous of the honour of their master, complained to him that Jesus drew away the people to himself, and took upon him the office of baptizing them. Upon this *John* with great sincerity and modesty declared how much he was inferior to Christ: He reminded them how often he had said that he was not the Messias, but his forerunner, he told them that his office would soon expire, and that Christ, who then began to appear, should obscure his glory, which was to him a cause of joy, not of envy; he told them that Christ was the beloved Son of God, sent by him and receiving from him the holy Spirit without measure, to reside upon him at all times, and to direct him in all things, that therefore whosoever believed on him should have everlasting life, and whosoever rejected him should not see life, but the wrath of God would abide upon him.

Thus is *John* the Baptist a witness of Christ, of his office and dignity; he calls Christ the Son of God, and the redeemer of the world, he affirms that he had a being
before

before he appeared on the earth, that he came from God to teach men the way to obtain eternal life; he asserts that he saw the Spirit descend upon him, and heard the voice from heaven which declared him the Son of God. He says that God, who had sent him to baptize, had revealed to him that Jesus was the Messias, having told him by what signs he might distinguish and know him.

II. To shew what opinion we ought to entertain of *John*, I proceed, in the second place, to give some account of his life and character.

The circumstances attending his birth are related at large by St. *Luke*. I shall not recite them at present, but only observe that from them it manifestly appears that he was designed by Providence for great purposes. All men, as we are told, were astonished at those things, and great expectations were raised concerning a child so favoured of heaven.

One reason why his birth was accompanied with many extraordinary events, seems to have been this.

Our

Our Lord has given an illustrious testimony to his merit, He says that he was a burning and a shining light, that he was a prophet, and more than a prophet, that amongst those who were born of women there had not arisen a greater than he. Yet, great as he was, in this he was inferior to many of the prophets, and to the disciples of Christ, that he wrought no miracles. This power was withholden from him, that the difference between the Messias and his forerunner might manifestly appear, and Christ alone might possess that honour.

But that the *Jews* might not be tempted to entertain any prejudice against him, and to think him an inconsiderable person, because he wrought no miracles, other singular marks of divine favour were bestowed upon him: his coming was foretold by the ancient prophets, and declared by an Angel, at a time when his parents were stricken in years; and other miraculous circumstances concurred to recommend him to the esteem of the people.

He dwelt in the hill-country of *Judæa*, in a place remote from the resort and the corruption of the world, till he appeared in
his

his ministry, and came near *Jordan* and *Jerusalem*, preaching the approach of the *Messias*. His life was austere and mortified, as his dress and food shewed; he came neither eating nor drinking, as *Jesus* said of him, upon which account some of the *Pharisees*, whom no behaviour could please, said that he had a devil. He flattered not the *Jews*, he spake to them as one having authority, he rebuked them for their faults; he exhorted them to the exercise of piety towards God, of justice and mercy in their dealings with each other. * Great multitudes came to him, confessed their sins, and received

* Though the success of the ministry of *John* had been less than it was, yet might he not improperly be said to turn the hearts, &c. and πάντα ἀποκαθίσαν, as he did all that was necessary for it. Verbs active sometimes signify a design and endeavour to perform a thing, whether it be accomplished or not. See *Le Clerc* and *Whitby* on *Mark* ix. 12, 13. and *Grotius* on *Thess.* II. II. 4.

Non sî trecentis, quotquot eunt dies,

Amice, places illacrimabilem

Plutona tauris.

Horace Carm. II. 14.

That is placare tentes.

Talibus Æneas ardentem et torva tuentem

Lenibat dictis animum, lacrimasque ciebat.

Virgil Æn. VI. 467.

That

received baptism of him as a sign of their repentance; and such was the opinion which they had of him upon account of his sanctity and self-denial, that, though he wrought no miracles, they believed and acknowledged him to be a prophet, and thought that possibly he might be the Messias.

There were some of the *Jews* who joined themselves to him, and became his disciples. We find them mention'd in the New Testament, their frequent fasts, the jealousy which they had of Christ, and their fears that he should lessen the reputation of their master.

The virtue of *John*, too great for the age in which he lived, and the esteem which the people had for him, were the occasion of his death. *Herod*, whom he had reprov'd, being offended at the freedom which he had taken, and probably suspecting him on account of his popularity, had thoughts of

That is, *lenire tentabat*; for his endeavour was vain. By the way, *torva tuentem lenibat animum* is a strange expression. Perhaps it should be *animam*, the shade or ghost of *Dido*.

Εἴ τις σε τὸν δίκαιον αὐτίκ' ἐνθάδε
κλένοι παρῶν, πότρεα πυθάνοι' ἂν εἰ
Παλῆς σ' καίνων, ἢ τίνοι' ἂν εὐθέως;

Εἴ τις σε κλένοι, if any one should attempt to kill you.

Sophocles Oed. Col. 1047.

killing

killing him; but at the same time he feared
 that the people would resent it, and still re-
 tained some remains of respect for him.
 Whilst he was thus in suspense, having pro-
 mised the daughter of *Herodias* to give her
 any thing that she could ask, at her request
 he beheaded him. Thus the Baptist having
 performed his office, died soon after Christ
 had begun his ministry. God took him
 then to himself; as an * ancient Christian
 writer has observed, that the people might
 no longer be divided between him and Christ,
 but might the more readily follow the Mes-
 sias.

The reputation of this prophet ended not
 with his life; the people continued to ho-
 nour his memory, in so much that when
Herod had lost an army by a great overthrow,
 the *Jews*, as † *Josepbus* informs us, said
 that it was a divine judgment, and a just pu-
 nishment inflicted upon him for putting
John to death.

* Οἶμαι δὲ καὶ διὰ τὸτο συγχαρηθῆναι τὴν τελευταίαν
 Ἰωάννη Ιαχίσην γενέσθαι, ὥστε πᾶσαν τὴν πλῆθους τὴν διὰ
 θεοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν Χριστὸν μελεθῆναι, καὶ μηκέτι ταῖς περὶ αὐ-
 τοῦ φρίσσειν αὐτοὺς κρίσεσιν γινώμεναι. *Chrysost.* in *Joan.*
Hom. XXVIII.

† *Antiq.* XVIII. 7.

III. I proceed to shew, thirdly, that the testimony of *John* the Baptist ought to be received.

He affirms that he knew Jesus to be the Messias, and this knowledge he acquires not by any observations which he had made upon the life and behaviour of Christ, nor from comparing his actions with the prophecies relating to the Messias; for at the time that he first gave his testimony, Christ had not discovered his divine mission, and was just entering into his office; nor does it appear that Christ had declared any thing of it to him, or any way endeavoured to persuade him that he was the Messias. He is not guided by conjectures, but by sure and convincing evidence, by immediate divine revelation, and by a voice from heaven declaring Christ to be the Son of God. He assures us that God who had separated him from his mother's womb for his own service, and who had sent him to go before the Messias and prepare his way, had also discovered to him that Christ was that person.

His record therefore depends upon his veracity, and his veracity appears unquestionable. Many circumstances concur to add weight

weight and authority to his testimony, and to remove all suspicion of enthusiasm and imposture.

For, from the observations which have been already made on *John* the Baptist, on the testimony which he gave, and on the manner in which he gave it, from these we may discover the character of a great and a good man. We see in him austerity of life, self denial, contempt of the pleasures and vanities of the world, an active yet discreet zeal, a courage and constancy arising from true piety, and a sincere modesty and humility. He flattered not the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* who came to his baptism, but told them that they were great sinners; he assumed no honours which belonged not to him; he said less of himself than he might have said with truth, when the *Jews* sent messengers to ask him whether he were the *Messias*, or some prophet. His disciples were probably good men, but they had an imprudent regard for him, and for their own credit, as they were his followers, and therefore they feared that Christ would draw all men after him, and lessen the reputation of their master; but he was not to be moved

by such improper motives, nor did he cease to bear testimony to Christ, and to acknowledge his own inferiority. He was appointed of God to exhort and reprove with all authority; and this office he performed towards *Herod*, though he could not be ignorant of the danger to which he exposed himself in telling disagreeable truths to a wicked prince. By his blameless and upright behaviour he gained the respect and esteem of the *Jews*, bad as they were; and after his death, the historian before named, who seems to have had no temptation to be partial to his memory, did justice to his character, and recorded his virtues, and the impression which they made on the minds of the people.

He was a man who practised the austerities of a mortified life, who rejected even innocent pleasures, and appeared severely virtuous, who exhorted all men to righteousness, and lived suitably to his own doctrines. He could not act this part with a view to any worldly profit, and to enrich himself: he sought no such advantages, and if he had sought them, he would never have obtained them by such methods, by pretending.

tending to slight them, by dwelling in the wilderness, and by exhorting men to virtues, of which if he had not set them an example, he would have been greatly despised. Nothing therefore can be thought to have influenced him unless religion, or vanity and the love of fame. If he was guided by ambition, he had reason to be satisfied with his success: all *Jerusalem* was moved at his preaching, and the people resorted to him, receiving his instructions and his baptism, and confessing their sins. They had so great an opinion of him, that they thought him certainly one sent from God; perhaps one of the old prophets returned into the world, perhaps the Messias himself. What use did he make of this favourable disposition of the people? He spake of himself with much lowliness and modesty, and exhorted them to acknowledge Christ as the Messias. If he had been a proud and ambitious man, he would not have set Jesus above himself, he would at least have been silent, and have left the *Jews* to judge for themselves.

We may then affirm that he was, what he seemed to be, a good man, and a lover of truth; and that he would not have de-

ceived the people in any case, above all, not in a case so important. He decided a question not of small consequence, but concerning the Messias, whom the prophets had foretold, whose coming was then expected, to whom the nation was bound to pay obedience, who should in some sense be a ruler, and a deliverer, and the founder of an everlasting kingdom. If we suppose him capable of deceiving the *Jews* in this affair, we must suppose him wicked to the highest degree, one who feared not God, nor regarded man; who endeavoured to lead into a fatal error his own nation by which he was honoured and respected. But it is unreasonable to suppose him guilty of so foul a crime.

We may also conclude that he would not have born testimony to one whom he did not well know to be the Messias, because common prudence would have kept him from throwing away so foolishly his good name and reputation. The character of the Messias could not be long personated by the most artful impostor. He was to be a teacher of truth and righteousness, in him the prophecies were to be accomplished, by
him

him many miracles were to be performed. If therefore *John* had directed the *Jews* to a false *Messias*, to one in whom none of these characters appeared, his fraud or his error would have been discovered, he would have exposed himself to the punishment which a false prophet deserved, at least he would have lost the esteem and favour of the *Jews*, and the fair and unblemished reputation which till then he had preserved, and been the object of their contempt and hatred. Nothing can make us suspect that he would have acted a part so inconsistent and extravagant, or hinder us from believing that he spake as he was directed by the Spirit of God.

Nor is it less evident that he acted on this occasion by no motives of interest or partiality. It was of no advantage to him: on the contrary, he saw, what his disciples saw, that if *Christ* were acknowledged to be the *Messias*, he would be no longer followed and admired. Nor can we suppose him partial out of friendship; for there appears not to have been any intimacy between him and *Christ*. We may observe that *John* was a person of eminent virtue, that he had born

witness to Christ, that he was related to him, and that upon all these accounts he seemed to deserve distinguishing marks of his favour. Yet Christ, as far as we can learn from the Evangelists, seldom conversed with him; the reason of which probably was, that the testimony of *John* might appear of the more weight, when none could suspect him prejudiced for his friend and his relation.

But still it may be alledged against his testimony, that he was an enthusiast. Some of the *Jews* in the days of our Saviour said that *John* the Baptist had lost his senses, because they had nothing else to say against him. The accusation is groundless; his discourses and his reputation sufficiently confute it; his prophetic character proves it to be false. He foretold the appearing of the Messias, the calamities which should befall the unconverted *Jews*, the death of Christ, and the descent of the holy Ghost. Enthusiasm may make a man fancy extraordinary communications with the deity, and it may lead him to austerities and self-denial; but it will not enable him to declare future events.

IV. I shall, in the last place, endeavour to remove an objection which may be offered against the testimony of *John*.

It is related in the New Testament that *John*, when he was in prison, hearing of the miracles of Christ, sent two of his disciples to him, saying, *Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?* Hence it may be objected that since *John* at the latter end of his life * doubted whether Jesus were the Messias, the force of the testimony which he bare before is greatly weakned, and he may be supposed to have changed his opinion, and, as far as we find, to have died uncertain what to think upon this affair.

In answer to this objection I would observe;

First, that the Evangelists, who have recorded the testimony which *John* bare of Jesus Christ, have also preserved the doubtful message which he sent to our Lord, and which may seem to lessen the strength of his former testimony. This is one instance,

* Tertullian thinks that *John* really doubted, *Advers. Marcion*. IV. 18. *De Præscr. Hæret.* 8. and *Le Clerc* inclines to the same opinion.

amongst many more, of their sincerity in representing the truth without disguise.

Secondly; *John* the Baptist at the beginning of his ministry, declared that Christ was the Messias, and afterwards, when he was in prison he heard of the miraculous works done by Christ, which tended to confirm him in his first opinion. If at that time he began to grow doubtful, the only imaginable cause of his doubts must have been this, that Christ appeared not as a temporal prince, to free him from his bonds and the *Jews* from their servitude. Since then his doubts, if he had any, must have arisen from his wrong apprehensions of the nature of Christ's kingdom, and of the happiness which the servants of the Messias should enjoy, they will never invalidate the testimony which he had so often born to Christ, and the revelation made to him, upon which his testimony was founded.

Thirdly; the words of *John* the Baptist, taken in their obvious sense, imply a doubt whether Christ were the Messias; but almost all expositors agree in thinking that he had no doubts about it, and that he sent not this message for his own information, because
John,

John, as himself asserts, knew Christ to be the Messias by divine revelation, and because he heard that Christ manifested his power by miracles, and had fulfilled that part of his character. They endeavour therefore to assign some other reason why he proposed this question to Christ.

The most common opinion is, that he proposed it for the information of his disciples, hoping that Christ would satisfy them by his answer, and perhaps by working miracles before them, and that they would at last lay aside their prejudices and join themselves to Christ.

But there is another opinion, less followed indeed, and yet more probable, which is, that as the *Jews* in general, and the disciples of Christ, so also *John* and his disciples expected a temporal reign of the Messias, and that they wondered why Jesus, who at that time wrought many miracles, did not deliver *John* out of the hands of his enemies.

He of all persons seemed most to deserve such favour and protection. He was separated from his mother's womb, and appointed by divine providence to be the forerunner of the Messias, to be the last and
the

the most honoured of all the prophets who came before Christ; he was sent to bear testimony to him, and to prepare the world to receive him; and this office he had faithfully fulfilled; he was related to Christ, and in virtue had no superior amongst the *Jews*: he was now in bonds for the sake of righteousness, and his life depended upon the will of a wicked prince who was exasperated against him. Being in these circumstances and hearing of Christ's miracles, he sends two disciples to him, and bids them say; *Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?* In which words we may suppose that he indirectly besought his assistance; as if he had said:

If thou art the Messias, why am I confined in prison? why may I not enjoy with thy disciples the pleasure of seeing him, whose coming I proclaimed, appear in his glory? It will cast some reproach upon thee, if thy forerunner be left to perish. The miserable find daily relief from thy miracles; add one in favour of me, and deliver me, for thou canst not want power.

It is true that *John* was filled with the holy Ghost, and had better notions of Christ than

than perhaps any of Christ's disciples entertained before the resurrection of their master. This we may conclude from the things which he spake of Christ's power and dignity, and of the end for which he came into the world. He calls him *the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*, which might incline us to imagine that he knew Christ should suffer and be a sacrifice for sin. But it is not improbable that tho' by revelation he knew in general that Christ would save from their sins those who should believe in him, yet he knew not how he would effect it; that the particulars concerning the sufferings and death of Christ were not discovered to him, and that both he and the prophets before him might foretell things of the Messias which they did not fully understand.

Lastly; there remains another solution of this difficulty to which some may perhaps give the preference.

John, for the reasons already mentioned, could not well doubt whether the person, whom he had baptized and to whom he had born testimony, were the Messias; but being in prison, and hearing the fame of Christ's

Christ's miracles, he wanted to be satisfied of two things, whether Jesus were that very person whom he had baptized and proclaimed, and whether the rumour concerning his miracles were true. He sends therefore his disciples, and bids them ask Christ if he were the expected Messias, and bring him an account of all that passed upon that occasion, that by Christ's answer and their report, he might form a surer judgment.

But, whether *John* had or had not any doubts at the time when he sent the message, thus much is highly probable, that after the return of his disciples, he and they were fully satisfied, first, because Christ's answer and miracles were sufficient to convince any wise and good man, and secondly, because *St. Matthew* relates that when *John* was beheaded, *his disciples came and took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus*; which was plainly an act of respect and kindness, and the behaviour of men who entertained an honourable opinion of Christ.

VI.

The Scriptures of the New Testament.

THE following observations relate to the truth, the importance, and the authority of the Scriptures of the New Testament.

I. The books of the New Testament were written by those to whom they are ascribed, that is, * by Apostles, or by believers

* Ἐν τοῖς νόθοις κατὰ τὰ χθρὸν καὶ τῶν Πούλε πρῶτων ἡ γενομένη, ὅ,τε λεγόμεναι Ποιμὴν, καὶ ἡ ἀποκάλυψις Πέτρου καὶ πρὸς ἰετέροις, ἡ φερμένη Βαρνάβα Ἐπιστολή, καὶ τῶν Ἀποστόλων αἱ λεγομέναι διδασκαλίαι. *Pro spurii habendi sunt etiam Actus Pauli, et liber Pastoris titulo inscriptus, et Revelatio Petri: Barnabæ item Epistola, et quæ dicuntur Institutiones Apostolorum.* Eusebius E. H. III. 25. Where Eusebius by the word νόθοις cannot possibly mean less than that these books were of ambiguous and contested authority. See *Valesius*.

The *Epistle* of BARNABAS is extant, and is sufficiently illustrated by learned men. Peruse him ; — *he shall speak for himself.*

In

lievers who lived and conversed with the Apostles. Of this we have as clear proof
as

In the APOSTOLICAL CONSTITUTIONS we find the following passage, VI. 24. *It has pleased God that the law of righteousness should not only be published by us, [the Apostles] but that it should be made conspicuous and illustrious by the Romans; for they also believing in the Lord have forsaken their idolatry and iniquity, and shew favour to the righteous, and punish the wicked; but they have the Jews for tributaries, and suffer them not to exercise their own laws and ordinances.* Οὐ μόνον δὲ τῆς δικαιοσύνης νόμον δι' ἡμῶν ἐπιδέκνυσθαι εἶλεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ Ῥωμαίων ἐυδόκησεν αὐτὸν φαίνεσθαι καὶ λάμπειν· καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἔτοι πεισυσαντες ἐπὶ τὸν Κύριον, καὶ πολυθείας ἀπέστησαν καὶ ἀδικίας· καὶ τὰς ἀγαθὰς ἀποδέχονται, καὶ τὰς φάυλας κολάζουσιν· Ἰουδαίους δὲ ὑποφώρας ἔχουσι, καὶ τοῖς ἰδίοις δικαιώμασιν ἐκ ἑῷσι κεχρηῆσθαι. I leave it to others to settle the time when this was written.

Concerning the SHEPHERD of HERMAS, it is observable that the persons who act in it are most of them *allegorical* persons and *ideal* beings, such as appear in the *Table of Cebes*, and in the *Hercules of Prodicus Ceus*, An ancient Lady converses with him, and tells him that she is the *Church* of God. Afterwards several virgins come and discourse with him, and when he wants to know who they are, he is told by the *Shepherd-Angel*, that they are *Faith, Abstinence, Patience, Chastity, Concord, &c.*

There is a great conformity between *Hermas* and the author of the second book of *Apocryphal Esdras*; for a Woman converses with *Esdras*, who, as the Angel tells him, was *Sion*, or the *Jewish Church*; and as in the same book the Woman vanishes away, and in her place appears a City; so in *Hermas* the Church is represented to him under the image of a Tower.

The

as the nature of the thing can admit, or any reasonable person can desire, namely the testi-

The Prophets sometimes beheld, but it was in *transcense* vision, such kind of persons. *Zechariah* saw *Wickedness* in the shape of a woman, ch. v. and *St. John* viewed *Death* and *Hades* Rev. vi. 18. and the *Church* appearing as a woman, Rev. xii. 1. and *Babylon* as a harlot, Rev. xvii. 3.

It is related in *Cyprian*, *Epist.* 39. *Edit. Oxon.* that the *Church* appeared in a vision, or dream, *in visione per noctem*, to *Celerinus*, and commanded him to receive the office of *Reader*, which he in humility had declined. Add to this that *St. John*, in his *second Epist.* calls the *Church* the *Elect Lady* by a *protopopæia*, as some interpreters think; but the contrary opinion is more probable.

Afterwards III. 9. *Hermas* tells us that the *Church* which appeared to him was *the Son of God*. The Apostles represent *Christ* as the head, the bridegroom, the husband of the *Church*.

Hermas seems to have had some literature, for though his subject did not lead him to shew any learning, he accidentally discovers a little of it. He makes the Angel say, ὅσον ἔτι αἱ αὐτῶν, ὥς νέων, φέρες ἡγέθονται. *Patr. Apost.* Ed. Cler. p. 80. The Angel alludes plainly to *Homer*, II. T. 108.

Ἀλλ' ὁ πλοτέρων ἀνδρῶν φέρες ἡγέθονται.

Again, p. 99. he makes him say; *Vide stillicidium, quod cavat lapidem*. So. *Lucretius* I.

Stillicidi casus lapidem cavat.

But this thought is indeed very trite and obvious.

In the parable of the *Elm* and the *Vine*, p. 104. the Angel says; *Vitis hæc, nisi applicita fuerit ulmo, non potest*

○

multum

testimony of all antiquity, of all the Christian writers who lived in or near those times.

II. The

multum fructum facere. Jacens enim in terrâ, &c. which is very like the speech of *Vertumnus* in *Ovid*, *Met.* XIV.

Ulmus erat contra spatiosa tumentibus uvis :

Quam socia postquam pariter cum vite probavit ;

At si stare, ait cælebs sine palmitè truncus,

Nil præter frondes, quare peteretur, haberet.

Hæc quoque, quæ juncta vitis requiescit in ulmo,

Si non nupta foret, terræ adclinata jaceret.

The first *Epistle* of *CLEMENS* is in the main a good piece, and not unworthy of an Apostolical Father, though it has a few small spots, and possibly, as *Edw. Bernard* and some others think, a few interpolations.

The same may be said of the second *Epistle* of *Clemens*, if it be his. There is indeed a quotation at the end of it from the Gospel according to the *Ægyptians*, which might as well have been omitted, and which perhaps was added by another hand.

This *Epistle* begins thus ; Ἀδελφοί, ὅτως δὲ ἡμᾶς φρονεῖν περὶ Ἰησοῦ, ὡς περὶ Θεοῦ, ὡς περὶ κειτὺ ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν καὶ ὅτι δὲ ἡμᾶς μικρὰ φρονεῖν περὶ τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ ᾧ φρονεῖν ἡμᾶς μικρὰ περὶ αὐτοῦ, μικρὰ καὶ ἐλπίζομεν λαβεῖν. *Fratres, ita sentire nos oportet de Jesu Christo, tanquam de Deo, tanquam de judice vivorum et mortuorum ; nec decet nos humilia sentire de salute nostrâ : dum enim humiliter sentimus de illo, parva etiam accepturos nos speramus.* I quote this place, because it wants emendation, and should be corrected thus ; — ὅτι δὲ ἡμᾶς μικρὰ φρονεῖν περὶ τοῦ ἀρχηγῆ τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν. *nec decet nos humilia sentire de auctore salutis nostræ.* This not only makes better sense, and agrees better with περὶ αὐτοῦ which follows it, but alludes to the

Epistle

II. The main parts of the Christian religion, enough, I mean, to establish the truth of it, may be found in almost each single book or treatise contained in the New Testament.

Take any of the Gospels, or the Acts of the Apostles, or the * Revelation, or any of

Epistle to the Hebrews, of which *Clemens* is observed to make frequent use in his uncontested *Epistle*. *Hebr. ii. 10.*
τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν.

The writer of this *Epistle* seems, in the place which I have quoted, to have had in view the *Ebionites*, πτωχῶς καὶ λαπινῶς τὰ περὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ δοξάζοντες. λιτὸν μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸν καὶ κοινὸν ἡγάγητο, κατὰ προκοπὴν ἦθες αὐτὸ μόνον ἀνθρώπου δεδουλωμένον — qui humiliter admodum et abjectè de Christo sentirent. Eum enim simplicem ac vulgarem, nec aliud quam hominem esse censebant, qui profectū virtutis justus factus fuisset. *Euseb. E. H. III. 27.*

Clemens, in his first *Epistle*, VI. p. 151. *Patr. Apost.* says; Ζῆλον καὶ εἰς πόλεις μεγάλας κατέσπευσεν, καὶ ἔθνη μέγала ἐξερρίζωσεν, alluding, perhaps, to *Horace* :

Iræ Thyestæ exitio gravi

Stravere, et altis urbibus ultimæ

Stetere caussæ cur perirent

Funditus —.

The spurious books under the names of Apostles are not altogether useless. They shew that the Forgers in those days were men of poor abilities, and by their deformity they serve to set off the writings of the Apostles.

* *Dionysius Alexandrinus* held the *Revelation* to be a sacred book, but was of opinion that it was not written by the

of the Epistles, two or three excepted, and, if they be allowed to be genuine, and to give

the Apostle St. *John*, and that the language and manner of composition shewed it to be of another person. His reasons may be seen in *Eusebius* E. H. VII. 25. It must be owned that there is a difference of style between the *Revelation* and the *Gospel*, of which I could give proofs, if it were needful; but the subject is also different. *Il ne faut pas s'étonner que l'air de l'Apocalypse soit différent de celui qu'on remarque dans les autres écrits de S. Jean, parceque la matiere en est extrêmement différente. Pour la langue, outre les autres raisons qu'on en pourroit rendre, ne peut on pas dire qu'étant relegué à Patmos, il n'avoit pas auprès de lui les mêmes personnes qu'il avoit à Ephèse pour se faire aider dans le choix des termes et des expressions? Et peutestre même que la chaleur de l'Esprit de Dieu le pressoit d'écrire promptement ce qu'il avoit vu, sans songer à une pureté et à une elegance qui n'est rien du tout devant Dieu.* Tillemont *Mem. Eccl.* T. I. S. *Jean*. Not. 9. Tillemont's conjecture is founded on a supposition which several persons will not admit, namely, that St. *John* wrote his *Revelation* at *Patmos*.

They who think, with Sir *Isaac Newton*, that St. *John* wrote the *Revelation* long before the *Gospel*, may suppose that the Apostle, when he composed the *Gospel*, had improved his style by conversing with the *Greeks* of *Asia Minor*.

But, besides ancient testimony, there is also *internal* reason to conclude that the *Gospel*, and the *Revelation* are the work of the same author:

Thus; *John* alone calls Christ $\Lambda\omicron\gamma\omega$, *the Word*, in the beginning of the *Gospel*, and in *Revel.* xix. 13.

John alone records that the Baptist called Christ *the Lamb of God*, alone applies to him the direction concerning the

give a true account of the things which they relate, the Christian religion must be * acknowledged to be fully confirmed.

III. The

the Paschal lamb, *a bone of him shall not be broken*, alone describes him as *the Lamb*. Revel. v. 6.

John makes great use of the words, λόγος, ὡς ἀληθινόν, ἀλήθεια, μάρτυς, ὁ ἀληθινός, μαρτυρῶ, ζῶν, ἀγάπη, ἀγαπῶ, in those writings which are ascribed to him.

John alone quotes, *They shall look on him whom they pierced*, in the Gosp. xix. 37. and Revel. i. 7.

John alone relates that a soldier pierced the side of Christ, and that blood and water came forth, xix. 34. and alludes to it, Epist. I. v. 6. as some Commentators suppose.

Rev. xxi. 27. Καί ὃ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτήν πᾶν κοινὸν καὶ ποιεῖν ἐδέλυγμα —

κοινὸν & ποιεῖν are *neuters* put for *masculines*, as in the Gosp. vi. 37. πᾶν ὃ δίδωσί μοι ὁ Πατήρ, πρὸς ἐμὲ ἦξει. *Grotius*.

Rev. xxii. 14. ἔσται ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς. — ἐξουσία, *jus*, as in the Gosp. I. 12. ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν ἵνα αὐτοὶ γενέσθωσι. *Grot.*

Rev. xxii. 2. ἐνέευσθεν καὶ ἐνέευσθεν. The same expression is found in the Gosp. xix. 18. Some MSS. have in the Rev. ἐνέευσθεν καὶ ἐκείθεν, but it seems to be an alteration quite unnecessary. *Aristot.* quoted in *Constant. Lexic.* ἐνθεν καὶ ἐνθεν τῆς ἀκάνθης. *Herodotus* II. 176. ὁ μὲν ἐνθεν, ὁ δ' ἐνθεν τῆς μεγάρας. *Sophocles* *Ajac.* 731. — ὀνειδέσιν Ἡρακλέους ἐνθεν καὶ ἐνθεν. Nothing is more common than ἐνθα καὶ ἐνθα. *Hinc et hinc* is found in *Virgil* and other poets, and often in *Seneca's Tragedies*.

* In scripturâ Novi Testamenti, imo in solis libris Lucae et Joannis ea continentur, quæ cuivis Christiano, cognitu, speratu, factu sunt necessaria ; quia hoc sibi fuisse propositum,

III. The books of the New Testament have descended to us uncorrupted in any thing material. This appears evidently from the quotations which have been made out of them by Christian writers in all ages, from the high esteem and veneration in which they have ever been held, from the multitude of copies and early translations, which left no room to fraud or inattention to do them any important injury, and from the various readings themselves, which, for the most part, are of small consequence.

IV. The truth of the things contained in these books depends upon the integrity of the Apostles, who did and endured so much for the sake of the Gospel. The good character of the Apostles is confirmed by the testimony of those many thousands who were converted by them; and the innocence and patience and great sufferings of these primitive Christians may be confirmed by the testimony of *Pagan* authors, and cannot with any shew of reason be denied.

tum, alter in præfatione, alter in conclusione operis profitentur. Sed præter hæc multa sunt scitu utilia, multa ad regimen Ecclesiæ etiam necessaria. *Grotius* Annot. ad Conf. Cass. p. 628.

V. There

V. There never was a book which abounded more with internal proofs of the truth of its contents than the New Testament. A spirit of piety, charity, and disinterestedness appears through the whole. The Evangelists, when they relate the same things, differ or seem to differ in small circumstances; they ingenuously confess the misbehaviour of the Apostles upon some occasions; they have sometimes recorded * what the smallest degree of craft and dissimulation would have taught them to suppress; they enter into a large and accurate detail of places, times, persons, and events, in which if they had mixed fraud and falshood, it might easily have been detected.

Of all the proofs which the New Testament carries in it self of its truth, there are few stronger than those which may be taken from the discourses of Jesus Christ.

Eminent men are observed to have usually a style of their own. Whosoever ex-

* A statuary works upon marble, an historian upon facts: both cut them to their fancy, and pare off all that will not serve for their purpose. The Writers of the New Testament stand remarkably clear from this imputation.

amines the discourses of our Lord with attention, may find in them a certain character and way of speaking peculiar to him. This manner, by which he may be distinguished, consists in * raising matter of instruction and moral reflection from the things which were at hand, which presented themselves to him and to his audience.

Hence it is that his sermons to the people, and his conversation with his disciples allude perpetually to the time of the year, or to the place where he was, or to the objects surrounding him, or to the occupation and circumstances of those to whom he addressed himself, or to the state of public affairs. Of this several examples might be produced. I shall lay before you those which may be taken out of his sermon upon the mount.

In the spring, our Saviour went into the fields, and sat down on a mountain, and made that discourse which is recorded in St. *Matthew*, and which is full of observations arising from the things which offered themselves to his sight: for,

* In speaking *pro re natâ*.

When

When he exhorted his disciples to trust in God, he bade them * *behold* the fowls of the air, which were then flying about them, and were fed by Divine providence, though they did not *sow*, nor *reap*, nor *gather into barns*; he bade them take notice † of the lilies of the field, which were then blown, and were so beautifully clothed by the same power, and yet toiled not, like the husbandmen, who were then at work.

Being in a place whence they had a wide prospect of a cultivated land, he bade them observe how God caused the sun to shine and the rain to descend upon the fields and gardens even of the wicked and ungrateful, and he continued to convey his doctrine to them under rural images, speaking of good trees and corrupt trees, of knowing men by their fruits, of wolves in sheeps clothing, of grapes not growing upon thorns, nor figs on thistles, of the folly of casting pretious things to dogs and swine, of ‡ good measure press'd down, and shaken together and running over.

* ἐμβλέψατε.

† *Solomon*, says he, ὃ περιεβάλετο ὡς ἐν τούτων.

‡ *Matth.* vii. 1. and *Luke* vi. 38.

Speaking

Speaking at the same time to people, many of whom were fishermen, and lived much upon fish, he says, *What man of you will give his son a serpent, if he ask a fish?* Therefore, when he said in the same discourse to his disciples, *Ye are the light of the world; a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid;* it is probable that he * pointed to a city within their view situated upon the brow of a hill: And when he called them *the salt of the earth*, he alluded perhaps to the husbandmen who were manuring † the ground; and when he compared every person who observed his precepts to a man who built a house upon a rock, which stood firm, and every

* *A few points towards the north appears that which they call the mount of the Beatitudes, a small rising, from which our blessed Saviour delivered his Sermon. Not far from this little hill is the city Saphet, supposed to be the antient Bethulia. It stands upon a very eminent and conspicuous mountain, and is seen far and near. May we not suppose that Christ alludes to this city in those words; A city set on a hill, &c. Maundrell's Journey to Jerusalem.*

Jerusalem, Nazareth, &c. stood upon hills.

† With dung, or with ashes, which abound with salts, or with which perhaps salt was mixed. *Sale conspersa sterilefcunt*, says Grotius, *unde loca devota et humanis adempta usibus sale conspergi solebant.* Too much salt may render the earth unfruitful: but a little of it has a contrary effect; and

I am

every one who slighted his words to a man who built a house upon the sand, which was thrown down by the winds and floods; when he used this comparison, 'tis not improbable that he had before his eyes houses standing upon high ground, and houses in the valley in a ruinous condition, which had been destroyed by inundations. *

From

I am told that salt is often used in manuring. Virgil
Georg. I. 193.

*Semina vidi equidem multos medicare serentes,
Et nitro prius, et nigra perfundere amurca,
Grandior ut factus filiquis fallacibus esset.*

* Going from Bethany to Jerusalem, with his disciples, as they passed over a mountain, he said, *If ye shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea it shall be done*, Matt. xxi. 21. In Luke xix. 12. he spake a parable concerning a nobleman, who went into a far country to receive a kingdom, alluding to that which had happened to Archelaus; *Christus hanc suam parabolam desumpsit ex more regum ejus ævi, qui beneficio Imperatorum regnabant, potius quam jure natalitium, quales ab Herode Magno in Judæâ fuerant. Non poterant diadema sumere, nisi jussu eorum qui Romæ rerum potiebantur. Herodes ille longinquum iter suscepit, ut regnum Judææ ab Antonio impetraret, nec frustra; ivit enim ex Judæa Romam, ut docet Josephus Ant. Jud. XIV. 25, 26, atque inde, τὴν βασιλείαν παραλαβὼν, accepto regno, in Judæam rediit. Iterum iter suscepit, ut sibi a Cæsare regnum confirmaretur, ut idem Historicus docet XV. 10. Idem successores ejus facere coacti sunt, quod ab eo-*
dem

From these observations concerning the style and genius of our Saviour's discourses, the following uses may be made.

We

dem scriptore discere est XVII. 13. Contra hosce legationes interdum a Judæis Romam missæ, ut ne regnum illis conferretur, aut etiam auferretur. Sic Archelaum accusarunt Judæi apud Cæsarem, Romæ, per legatos. Hinc intelligimus rationem, ob quam ita parabola concepta est. Archelaus, exempli causa, erat homo ἐγγενής, natus quippe ab Herode. Idem abiit in regionem longinquam (in Italiam) accipere sibi regnum (Judææ) et reverti (in Judæam.) Cives vero, qui eum ode- rant, miserunt legationem post illum, dicentes (apud Cæsarem) nolumus hunc regnare super nos; quod non potuerunt tamen impetrare. Itaque rediit, accepto regno, ἐθνάρχῃαν παραλαβὼν, ut loquitur Josephus. Deinde de inimicis, qui noluerant eum regnare super se, gravem ultionem sumfit. Clericus.

When he says, Luke xxii. 25. *The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors*, he alludes to the vanity of some wicked Princes in those times, who deserved the title of Robbers much better than of Benefactors. *Hæc fuit inanis gloria principum illius ævi, ut ἐυεργετῶν vel benefactorum cognomen ambirent, eo ipso tempore, quo tyrannicè populos regebant; populi que proinde adulationis causâ titulum hunc in eos conferebant, aut ut levis beneficii gratiam referrent. Principes ideo urbibus congiaria dividebant, aut eas ædificiis publicis ornabant, aliaque similia faciebant; nec tantum in regno suo, sed etiam apud vicinos. Ita se gesserat Herodes Magnus, non tantum in Judæâ et viciniâ, sed etiam in mediâ Græcia, ut Athenis, Lacedæmone, Olympiæ, aliisque in oppidis, ut docet Josephus. Bell. Jud. I. 16. Exstat etiamnum Athenis ——— inscriptio basi statuæ, ut videtur, insculpta in honorem Berenicæ reginæ, de qua Act. xxv. in qua eam*

We may conclude that the writers of the Gospels have given us always the substance, often

eam vocant Athenienses Ἰελίαν Βερενίκην βασιλίσαν μεγάλην Ἰελίς Ἀγείππα βασιλέως θυγατέρα, καὶ μεγάλων βασιλείων εὐεργετῶν τῆς πόλεως ἐκγονον. Cernitur idem titulus in nummis antiquis in multos principes collatus.—Clericus.

When the woman of *Samaria*, *Job. iv.* wondered that he should ask water of her, he took occasion to represent his doctrine under the image of *living water*, or water which flows from a spring.

When he was by the sea-shore, *Mat. xiii.* he spake three parables to the people concerning a sower, because it was then probably seed time, as others have observed.

At the time of the Passover, alluding to it, he says, *Job. v. 24.* *He that heareth my word, μετὰ ζέουσιν, is passed from death unto life.* Grot.

Sir Isaac Newton, *Observat. on the Prophecies* p. 148. says: *Christ and his forerunner John, in their parabolical discourses, were wont to allude to things present. The old prophets, when they would describe things emphatically, did not only draw parables from things which offered themselves, as from the rent of a garment, 1 Sam. xv. from the sabbatic year, Isai. xxxvii. from the vessels of a potter, Jer. xviii. but also, when such objects were wanting, they supplied them by their own actions, as by rending a garment, 1 Kings xi. by shooting, 2 Kings xiii. by making bare their body, Isai. xx. by imposing significant names to their sons, Isai. viii. Hof. i. by hiding a girdle in the banks of Euphrates, Jer. xiii, by breaking a potter's vessel, Jer. xix. by putting on fetters and yokes, Jer. xxvii. by binding a book to a stone and casting them both into Euphrates, Jer. li. by besieging a painted city, Ezech. iv. by dividing their hair into three parts, Ezech. v. by making a chain, Ezech. vii. by carrying out household stuff*
like

often the words of our Lord's sermons. They

like a captive and trembling, Ezech. xii. By such kind of types the prophets loved to speak. And Christ being endued with a nobler prophetic spirit than the rest, excelled also in this kind of speaking, yet so as not to speak by his own actions, that was less grave and decent, but to turn into parables such things as offered themselves. On occasion of the harvest approaching, he admonishes his disciples once and again of the spiritual harvest, John iv. 35. Mat. ix. 37. Seeing the lilies of the field, he admonishes his disciples about gay clothing, Mat. vi. 28. In allusion to the present season of fruits, he admonishes his disciples about knowing men by their fruits, Mat. vii. 16. In the time of the passover, when trees put forth leaves, he bids his disciples learn a parable from the fig-tree: When its branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh, &c. Mat. xxiv. 32. Luke xxi. 29. The same day, alluding to both the season of the year and to his passion, which was to be two days after, he formed a parable of the time of the fruits approaching, and the murdering of the heir, Mat. xxi. 33. Alluding at the same time, both to the money-changers whom he had newly driven out of the temple, and to his passion at hand, he made a parable of a nobleman going into a far country to receive a kingdom and return, and delivering his goods to his servants, and at his return condemning the slothful servant, because he put not his money to the exchangers, Mat. xxv. 14. Luke xix. 12. Being near the temple, where sheep were kept in folds to be sold for the sacrifices, he spake many things parabolically of sheep, of the shepherd, and of the door of the sheepfold; and discovers that he alluded to the sheepfolds which were to be hired in the market-place, by speaking of such folds as a thief could not enter by the door, nor the shepherd himself open, but a porter opened to the shepherd, John x. 1. 3. Being in the mount of Olives, Mat. xxvi. 30.

John

They did not invent discourses, and ascribe them

John xiv. 31. *a place so fertile that it could not want vines, he spake many things mystically of the husbandman, and of the wine and its branches, John xv. Meeting a blind man, he admonished of spiritual blindness, John ix. 39. At the sight of little children he described once and again the innocence of the elect, Mat. xviii. 2. xix. 13. Knowing that Lazarus was dead and should be raised again, he discoursed of the resurrection and life eternal, John xi. 25, 26. Hearing of the slaughter of some whom Pilate had slain, he admonished of eternal death, Luke xiii. 1. To his fishermen he spake of fishers of men, Mat. iv. 10. and composed another parable about fishes, Mat. xiii. 47. Being by the temple, he spake of the temple of his body, John ii. 19. At supper he spake a parable about the mystical supper to come in the kingdom of heaven, Luke xiv. On occasion of temporal food, he admonished his disciples of spiritual food, and of eating his flesh and drinking his blood mystically, John vi. 27, 53. When his disciples wanted bread, he bad them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, Mat. xvi. 6. Being desired to eat, he answered that he had other meat, John iv. 31. In the great day of the feast of tabernacles, when the Jews, as their custom was, brought a great quantity of waters from the river Siloah into the temple, Christ stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink. He that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water, John vii. 37. (So also Grotius) The next day, in allusion to the servants who by reason of the sabbatical year were newly set free, he said: If ye continue in my word, the truth shall make you free: Which the Jews understanding literally with respect to the present manumission of servants, answered, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, ye shall be made free? John viii. — In the last passover, when Herod led his army through Judea against Aretas king of Arabia,*

them to * him. If they had followed this method, they would probably have made for him discourses exhorting to virtue and dissuading from vice in general terms; it would not have entered into their thoughts to have crowded together so many allusions to time and place, and to other little occurrences, which nothing, besides the presence of the objects, could suggest.

We may also plainly see in the discourses of Jesus Christ his great design, which was to instruct. Therefore he conveys knowledge in a familiar way, he adapts his language to his hearers, he speaks to their eyes, and to their ears, he chuses images and comparisons which would strike them most

Arabia, because Aretas was the aggressor and the stronger in military forces, as appeared by the event; Christ alluding to that state of things, composed the parable of a weaker king, leading his army against a stronger who made war upon him, Luke xiv. 31. And I doubt not but divers other parables were formed upon several occasions, the history of which we have not.

* As Plato, who is justly supposed to have often given his own thoughts and words to his master Socrates; and as Greek and Latin Historians never scrupled to do, who introduce the great men, of whom they write, making long harangues, of which they never uttered one word.

power-

powerfully and make a lasting impression upon their minds.

The words of Jesus Christ being thus supposed to be genuine, we may from them not unreasonably conclude that he was a prophet sent from God for the benefit of mankind.

In his discourses appear a profound veneration of almighty God, an earnest desire of promoting his honour, noble and just sentiments of his power, wisdom, goodness, justice and providence, and a submissive resignation to his will under great afflictions.

From them may be gathered a system of most pure and strict morality, the observance of which, as our Lord declares, would expose his followers to many inconveniences and much ill usage, and should not be fully recompensed before the next state.

In them is seen his prudence and wisdom in exposing superstition and hypocrisy, in inducing men to repentance sometimes by amiable representations of God's mercy, sometimes by awful declarations of his justice, and in shunning ostentation and applause.

P

In

In them appears charity, condescension, affability, love and pity to mankind.

From his discourses we may conclude that his * behaviour was suitable to them; for if his deeds had contradicted his words, he would have been despised, and could have made no disciples.

From his discourses therefore and his behaviour, as they are recorded in the Gospels, we may conclude that he was, as he declared himself to be, the Son of God. If we should suppose him to have been an impostor and a false prophet, a character would arise full of such contradiction and inconsistency, of such prudence and folly, of such knowledge and ignorance, of such goodness and wickedness, as never appeared in the world before or since.

Another proof which the writings of the New Testament afford of their own autho-

* It was well observed by *Origen*, that amongst the many slanders which had been forged and uttered against Jesus by *Jews* and *Gentiles*, none had dared to accuse him of having offended in the slightest degree against purity and chastity, and that Spite and Calumny itself had spared that part of his character. Ἐ μὴδὲ οἱ μυρία κατηγορήσαντες, καὶ ψευδῆ ὅσα περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες, δεδύνηται κατεπείν, ὡς καὶ τὸ θυχρὸν ἀκολασίας καὶ ἐπ' ὀλίγον γευσάμενοι. *Contr. Cel-*
III. p. 132.

rity arises from the prophecies contained in them. We find there predictions of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and of the conversion of the *Gentiles* by the speedy and extensive propagation of the Gospel.

VI. If we should suppose that the writers of the New Testament had no extraordinary assistance from God in composing their books and epistles, the prophetic parts excepted, the truth of the Christian religion in general might still be proved; there would still be sufficient evidence that Christ came from God to teach men to live soberly, righteously, and piously, that he wrought miracles, that he died and rose again, that his Apostles received supernatural powers by which they were enabled to propagate the Gospel.

The writers of the New Testament were Apostles, or companions of the Apostles, who had conversed with Christ, who spent their time in converting men to the Christian religion and in presiding over the Church, who preached a more perfect morality than had been taught before, who lived suitably to their own doctrines, and

many of whom laid down their lives in testimony of the truth. Consequently we may esteem them honest men and faithful historians. But since an honest man may possibly mistake, not indeed in facts which he affirms to be true upon his own knowledge, but in inferences from those facts, in precepts and doctrines, or in delivering the sentiments of others, if we can say no more in behalf of the writers of the New Testament, their authority will be only human. There seems wanting something more than a good life and a mind purified from passion and prejudice to qualify them to be the first teachers of a new revelation, namely a Divine assistance which we call inspiration.

How far, and in what degree the Apostles were inspired, is not easy to determine, nor consequently necessary to be known. Thus much we may affirm, that they were * assisted of God to give us a faithful account of the things which we ought to be-

* Spiritus sanctus Apostolos et Evangelistas confirmavit in doctrinâ Evangelicâ : in cæteris rebus, ut hominibus, reliquit quæ sunt hominum. *Grotius ad Act. vii. 3.*

lieve, and to perform, that we may obtain eternal life. *

For (1.) The Apostles had a promise of divine assistance upon certain occasions. *When they deliver you up, says Christ, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your*

* The divine Providence has not judged it proper to conduct us to eternal life by operating irresistibly upon our heart, or by offering invincible evidence to our understanding, or by securing us from all mistake, or by delivering us from all doubt. The first teachers of Christianity were not appointed to publish an edition or translation of the Old Testament which should correct every little transposition, &c. which had entered into it, nor to explain every prophesy and solve every difficulty contained in it, nor to give a catalogue of all the sacred books extant in their time, nor to explain some things which themselves have delivered obscurely and in part, nor to write books in which there should be nothing hard to be understood and of uncertain signification. The divine Wisdom has not judged it necessary to preserve the copies of the New Testament from the errors of transcribers or translators, or to raise up a succession of prophets to determine the controversies arising in the Church. But the great truths of natural and revealed religion, and the great duties of life, and the divine power, wisdom and goodness of Jesus Christ, and the miraculous and prophetic testimony of the holy Ghost, and the sacred authority of the Apostles, are clearly taught in the Scriptures, and supported with an evidence sufficient to satisfy a rational enquirer. For those whom this evidence will not move, God has provided no remedy.

Father which speaketh in you. Whence we may reason thus ; If the Apostles were to receive from the holy Ghost a skill to speak what was proper when they appeared in public to defend Christianity, we may suppose that they were guided by the same Spirit in their writings ; because this was of greater importance, and more worthy of the Divine interposition. By speaking justly they might confute some adversaries, preserve themselves and their religion from the contempt of their hearers, and convert and confirm that part of the assembly which had good dispositions ; whereas their writings were designed for the service not of four or five hundred men, but of all ages and nations.

(2.) Our Saviour promised his Apostles that the holy Ghost should continually abide with them, that he should lead them into all truth, and that in particular he should bring to their remembrance whatsoever Christ had said unto them ; which will appear to have been necessary, if we consider that the Gospels consist in a great measure of the discourses of Christ, that Christ conversed with them at least for three years,
that

that they had at that time very imperfect notions of the religion which he came to teach, and of the office to which they should be appointed; and that in all probability they had not * collected materials for the Gospels, or set down his discourses, whilst he was with them.

(3.) Our Lord told his disciples that they were not then disposed to receive and understand some truths which the holy Ghost should afterwards reveal to them; and the Apostles have taught us some things which are not to be found in the Gospels, or are not clearly delivered there, as, the design and the abolishment of the Ceremonial law, certain relative duties, and some particulars concerning the worship of God and the regulation of Christian societies or Churches.

It is therefore a vain distinction which some have attempted to make between the precepts or doctrines of Christ and those of the Apostles, as if less regard were to be paid to the latter than to the former. Our Saviour seems plainly to equal the Apostles to himself, as teachers, commands all men

* When Christ, after his resurrection, sent forth his Apostles, he gave them no command to write.

to receive them, to hear them, and to pay the same deference to them as to him.

(4.) Lastly, the Apostles * upon several occasions affirm that they had an extraordinary guidance of the holy Spirit; they declare that they had received their doctrines, not from men, but from Jesus Christ, and that every one who pretended to inspiration must acknowledge this, or ought to pass for an impostor, if he owned it not. They say that they had the mind of Christ; they call their doctrine the word of God and of Christ, the commandment of God and of the Lord, the wisdom of God, the wisdom which God had revealed to them by his Spirit, and words which the holy Ghost had taught them, the testimony of God, the Gospel of God by which men should be judged: they assert that they are of God, that he who knoweth God heareth them, and that he who heareth them not is not of God.

VII. It cannot be denied that the Scriptures are often obscure and diffi-

* *Rom.* ii. 16. *Cor.* I. ii. 7. 10. 12, 13. xiv. 37. *Ephes.* iii. 3. 5. *Thess.* I. ii. 13. iv. 15. *Joh.* I. iv. 6. &c.
See *Whitby* Gen. Pref. Vol. I.

cult, as for example, where the subject is prophesy or controversy, where words and phrases are used which are not to be found in other authors, and are now become of uncertain signification, and where doctrines are revealed not fully, but in part. Besides the obscurity arising from the subject and the style, the Scriptures have other difficulties common to all books which are very ancient and written in dead languages.

But many parts of the Scriptures are clear, and particularly those which relate to * morality, to practical religion.

When we say that the Scriptures are clear in many places, the meaning is that they will be clear to those who take the proper methods to understand them, and seek instruction, and pray to God for direction and assistance, and are desirous to obey and please him.

Persons of dispositions equally good, will understand more or less of the Scriptures ac-

* In iis quæ unicuique necessaria sunt creditu, speratu, factu, valdè est perspicua Scriptura. In cæteris quantâ opus sit cognitione linguarum, collatione versionum, quanto labore, experti sunt veteres, et nunc experiuntur qui in eo desudant. *Grotius Annpt. ad Consult. Cassand.*

cording to their several capacities and * opportunities; and that degree of knowledge, which in the poor and illiterate were highly commendable, would be gross and vitious ignorance in those of higher rank, of more leisure, learning, and abilities.

The ignorance of some people in matters of religion is astonishing, and the only plausible excuse for it, namely want of capacity or want of † leisure, is often shamefully groundless: for the knowledge required of every person cannot be greater than his abilities, and the ‡ abilities of many persons are greater than they think. The understanding must be exercised before its strength

* They who say that human learning is of no use in religion, are no more to be disputed with than the honest man in *Horace*,

*Qui se credebat miros audire tragædos,
In vacuo lætus sessor plausorque theatro.*

Sola Scripturarum ars est, says *Jerome*, quam sibi omnes passim vendicant; hanc garrula anus, hanc delirus senex, hanc sophista verbosus, hanc universi præsumunt, lacerant, docent antequam discant.

† Virorum nugæ, negotia vocantur. *Augustin Confess.*
I. 9.

‡ See *Locke Conduct of the Underst.* § 4.

can be known, and by exercise it may be improved beyond imagination; and as to leisure, * there are few even of those who are engaged in a laborious way of life, who have not many hours which are a burden to them, or are consumed in a manner that hurts their souls and their bodies.

Common people are not to be encouraged to spend that time in religious exercises which is due to the care of their families, nor to make piety a cloke for laziness, nor to be contentious about things which they understand not; but if they would bestow a seventh part of their time and of their industry in the improvement of their hearts and minds and in religious meditations, they would find their advantage in it many ways; they would probably avoid several sins which ruin them even in this world, they would be more honest, more sober, more civil, and more industrious, and conse-

* Much business is no excuse for neglecting him in whom we live and move and have our being. Every Christian should be able to apply to himself in a religious sense the words of *Julius Cæsar* in *Lucan* :

— *media inter prælia semper
Stellarum cælique plagis, superisque vacavi.*

quently

quently meet with more encouragement and kindness from their superiors, they would find more divine assistance, more comfort, more peace of mind, and resignation in all circumstances, and they would not be, what several of them now are, guilty of so many faults, and exposed to so many evils, that it is hard to say whether they are more wicked or more miserable.

VII.

The Gospel considered as it is grace and truth.

ST. *John* tells us that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, that he brought them into the world, and that they are contained in the revelation of God's will of which he was the author.

I. The Gospel is frequently called grace; and this word has several meanings, all of which may be applied to the Gospel.

1. The word *grace*, in its most obvious acceptation, means, favour, favour flowing from mercy and beneficence, to which the person who receives it can make no claim, as of right. In this sense the Gospel is most particularly and emphatically grace in all and every part of it, it is a gift of God which we could not in any manner be said to deserve.

2. The

2. The Gospel is grace as it promises to *repenting sinners not only an exemption from punishment, but a resurrection to eternal happiness; and our Saviour shewed so much tenderness and lenity, and gave so much encouragement to all in whom he discovered dispositions towards amendment, that he drew upon himself from the censorious *Jews* the opprobrious name of the friend of sinners and of †Publicans, a name which he was very willing to accept, declaring that he came into the world for the sake of such persons, and that

* It was an unreasonable objection made to Christianity by *Julian* in his *Cæsars*, and by *Celsus* in *Orig.* III. p. 147. that by offering pardon to repenting sinners it favoured immorality, and set open the kingdom of heaven to vice and folly. *Zosimus* II. p. 61. insinuates the same thing, and says that *Constantine* had recourse to Christianity after the *Pagan* priests had told him that their religion afforded no purgation for such heinous crimes as he had committed. See *Phileleuth. Lipsiens.* P. II. p. 20.

† Πάντες τελῶναι πάντες εἰσὶν ἄπαυες.
Quot publicani, tot raptores.

The Emperor *Vespasian's* father was a remarkable exception to this proverb, who was at the same time a Publican and a man of honour, and of whom *Suetonius* relates,—*publicam quadragesimæ in Asiâ egit. Manebantque imagines a civitatibus ei positæ cum hoc titulo, Καλῶς τελωνήσαντι. Vespas. cap. I.*

the

the business of his life was to seek and save them.

Repentance is indeed a duty of natural religion, and reason gives us hopes that it may be advantageous to us.

For as it is certain that sin is evil and detestable, and displeasing to God, it is no less evident that to confess and dislike and condemn our faults, to avoid them for the future, to amend whatsoever is blameable in our conduct, to practise the duties which we have neglected, are actions good in themselves and acceptable to God, and therefore cannot be unprofitable to us.

Besides, we find our selves * able to change, as from better to worse, so from worse to better. Now certainly it is not to
no

* This freedom neither excludes the Divine assistance, nor renders it unnecessary: Man unquestionably receives all his powers from his Maker, and continually stands in need of his aid, for the performance of his duty.

If we can neither think nor act otherwise than we do, or rather, if we cannot act, in a true sense, but are actuated by something external, we must be just what we are, and power and choice belong not to us. Let us be concerned about nothing, if our concern signifies nothing; so advises the Poët and Fatalist;

Solvite,

no purpose that we enjoy this power. It seems therefore probable that God, who has made us beings capable of amendment, will shew some favour to us if for the time to come we carefully endeavour to deserve it.

To this may be added the consideration of the great goodness of God. We account it commendable in men to forgive offences when the offender owns his fault, and offers such reparation as he is able to make, and changes his behaviour. But God must surpass us in goodness no less than in all other perfections.

*Solvite, mortales, animos, curasque levate,
Totque supervacuis vitam deplete querelis.
Fata regunt orbem, certâ stant omnia lege.*

Manilius IV. 13.

But the advice seems to come with an ill grace from a Fatalist, and men might return the Poët this answer upon his own principles ;

*Desine nos monitis, Vates, illudere vanis ;
Hoc quoque fatale est, tristes effundere questus
Incasum, et curis nil proficientibus angî.*

Homo, as *Grotius* well observes, solus ad imaginem Dei conditus dicitur, hoc est, mente liberæque arbitrio præditus, quod fundamentum est dominationis ipsius in cæteras creaturas. Non potest enim rerum aliarum esse dominus, qui suarum actionum dominus non sit. *De Satisfact.*

The

The same favourable conclusions may also be drawn from the weakness of human nature, which though it be no excuse for stubborn disobedience, yet seems to render the penitent proper objects of Divine mercy. If man were not a creature exposed to many violent temptations, frail, and easily seduced, certainly some would be found of unspotted innocence and integrity. But it is evident that the very best offend in many things. We must therefore conclude, either that God requires unfinning obedience, and will spare none of the race of mankind, which cannot be supposed, or that he will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss.

Lastly, the end and design of punishment is to be considered. To punish for revenge, and only that the offender may become miserable, is a conduct unworthy of a good and wise being. Punishment should be inflicted either for the profit and amendment of the offender, or for the good of the whole, or for both. But if God should punish repenting sinners very rigorously, and never pardon them, nothing useful could arise from their sufferings; not their own amendment, nor the improvement of their fellow-
Q
creatures,

creatures, who could only be terrified and driven to despair by such examples.

These seem to be the suggestions of human reason left to itself, concerning the profitableness of repentance and reformation. But the utmost that a man can conclude without the assistance of revelation, is, that it shall be much better for him in a future state, if he amends his life, than if he continues wicked. Thus far reason goes, and no farther.

But though repentance be, as we have observed, a part of natural religion, yet it seems to have been little practised by many of the *Gentiles*. * Amendment of life is a comely and commendable thing, and the
Pagans

* *Referamur illuc, unde non decuit prius
Abire : vel nunc casta repetatur fides.
Nam sera nunquam est ad bonos mores via.
Quem pœnitet peccasse, pœne est innocens.*

Seneca Agamemni.

Αὐτὸς — ὁρθῶς γίγνοιτο ἡμῖν, προαγορευὼν ἐξ ἱστορίας
πᾶσι τοῖς ἀσέβεσι τέκνων τῶν αὐτῶν εἰς τὰς εὐσεβείας. —

Sermo — rectè sequitur, qui impiis omnibus prædicet, ut a suis moribus ad pietatem sese convertant. Plato, de Leg. X.

When a man has taken ill courses, says *Cebes*, he becomes miserable for the remaining part of his life, unless *Repentance* interposes, by whose friendly assistance he is saved, and made happy. τὸν λοιπὸν βίον καλᾶς γέφει ἐν πάσῃ κακο-
δαιμονίᾳ,

Pagans certainly approved it; but that part of repentance which is a religious sorrow, an acknowledgment of past offences to God our maker and governor, and prayers to him to forgive them, the Gentiles seem in a great measure to have overlooked, both in the course of their life, and at the * close of it.

The

δαμονία, ἂν μὴ Μελάνοια αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τῆς τύχης συναν-
τήσῃ, — ἔτα — ἐξαίρει αὐτὸν ἐκ τῶν κακῶν, — [κ] σώ-
ζεται, κ' μακάριος κ' εὐδαίμων γίγνεται — *Tabul. Celet.*

That some *Pagans* had and have some notions of the ef-
ficacy of repentance see in *Huet*, *Alnet. Quæst. II. 20.*
p. 275. III. 14. 369, 370.

* *The [Christian] doctrine of repentance Nature never taught in her school, neither was it ever found in the Books of the learned, &c.* John Hales *Serm. on St. Peter's fall.*

The lady in the island *Cea*, of whom *Val. Maximus* tells a remarkable story, recommended her self before she drank poison to the favour of *Mercury*; but we find not that she made any acknowledgment of sins, or asked forgiveness of the Gods: *Tum defusus Mercurio delibamentis, et invocato numine ejus, ut se placido itinere in meliorem sedis infernæ deduceret partem, cupido haustu mortiferam traxit potionem.* II. VI. 8.

That this recommendatory prayer to *Mercury* was not un-
common, we may conjecture from *Sophocles*, who makes *Ajax* say, before he falls on his Sword, 838.

———— καλῶ δ' ἄμα

Πομπάϊον Ἑρμῆν χθόνιον εὖ με κοιμίσαι,
Εὖν ἀσφαδάσθ' κ' ἰαχῇ πηδήμασι,
Πλευράν διαρρήξαντα ἰῶδε φασγάνῳ.

Q 2

In

The Law of *Moses* appointed expiations and sacrifices for some offences ; and for some offences it appointed none.

The

In his *Oedipus Colon.* 1552. the Chorus prays to the infernal Gods, that they would grant that unhappy prince an easy death and a quiet passage to their dominions :

Εἰ θέμις ἐστὶ μοι ἴδν ἀθανῆ θεῶν
Καὶ σὲ λιλᾶς σεβίζειν
Ἐννοχίων ἀναξ, &c.

Socrates, holding the cup in his hand, said—*this however is lawful and right, to pray to the Gods that my departing from this state to another, may be happy. So I pray, and so be it.* — ἀλλ' εὐχεσθαι γέ πρ τοῖς θεοῖς ἔξεστί γε καὶ χρῆν, ἴην μελοίκουσιν ἴην ἐνδένδε ἐκείσε εὐτυχῆ γενέσθαι. ἀ δὴ καὶ ἐγὼ εὐχομαι γε, καὶ γένοιτο ταύτη. *Plato. Phæd.* 66.

These prayers were call'd ἐξήγητοι εὐχαὶ, as *Mr. Forster* has observed in his note on this passage.

Peregrinus, εἶπεν, Δαίμονες μητρῴοι καὶ πατρῴοι, δέξασθ' ἐμε εὐμενῆς. ἰαυτα εἰπὼν ἐπήδησεν εἰς τὸ πῦρ. *dixit ; O materni atque paterni Dæmōnes, suscipite me propitii. Quibus dictis in ignem insiliit.* *Lucian, de Mōrt. Pér.*

From a survey of the devotions of the *Gentiles* it will appear that, some instances excepted, there was nothing spiritual in their prayers, no thanksgiving, no request for divine assistance in the performance of their duty, no pious sorrow and acknowledgment of their offences.

After the propagation of the Christian religion, we find forms of adoration in some *Pagan Writers*, which are more rational and spiritual than the old Hymns and prayers of their ancestors ; and we may reasonably suppose that these improvements arose from the Gospel. See *Procl. Hymn. ad Solem*,

The Prophets exhorted finners in general to return to God, and declared, that a broken and contrite heart God would not reject and despise, even where no sacrifices had been appointed, or would be accepted by him. But that repentance shall open a way for us to eternal life, is clearly taught only in the Gospel.

Solem, et ad Musas; *Jamblich. de Myst. Ægypt. §. 5. c. 26*; *Simplic. in Epictet. ad fin.* to whom I wish I could add *Maximus Tyrius*. It is pity that he, who on other accounts deserves commendation, should have taught that prayer to God was superfluous, *Disc. 30.* See also *Jurnal, x. 346.* and the Commentators.

Seneca says, *Primus est deorum cultus, deos credere: deinde reddere illis majestatem suam, reddere bonitatem. — Vis deos propitiare? bonus esto. Satis illos coluit quisquis imitatus est.* *Epist. 95. p. 470.* But that he did not think prayer to be useless and unnecessary, as some may fancy from these words, will appear from the following places. *Nos quoque existimamus vota proficere, salva vi et potestate factorum. Quædam enim a Diis immortalibus ita suspensa relicta sunt, ut in bonum vertant, si admotæ Diis preces fuerint, si vota suscepta.* *Nat. Quæst. 11. 57.* *Itaque non dat Deus beneficia, — non exaudit precantium voces et undique sublatis in cælum manibus vota facientium privata ac publica. Quod profecto non fieret, nec in hunc furorem omnes mortales consensissent alloquendi surda numina et inefficaces Deos, nisi nossent illorum beneficia nunc ultro oblata, nunc orantibus data.* *De Benef. IV. 4.*

3. The Gospel is grace, as it promises us, if we humbly and sincerely desire it, the Divine assistance, which shall comfort us in afflictions, and support us under temptations, and enable us to work out our salvation, and to pass safely through this state of trial to a state of happiness.

4. The Gospel may be called grace with respect to the manner in which it was revealed. The Law, which was a severer institution, was delivered with an awful pomp and majesty, that might strike a terror into the people, and work powerfully upon their fears, and extort obedience from them by the dread of punishment. But the Gospel, the covenant of peace, made its appearance with mildness and condescension. It was introduced by the Son of God conversing familiarly with men, teaching them by his doctrine and example, willing with great patience to bear with their imperfections and weaknesses, and to guide them gently to virtue and knowledge by plain and repeated instructions.

5. The Gospel is grace, as it contains righteous and equitable laws. The duties towards God, which it requires of us, are
a rea-

a reasonable service which we are bound in gratitude to perform. Our duty to our neighbour, as it is there laid down, promotes the happiness of mankind, renders us useful in every station, raises us up friends, and makes us pass our days with tranquillity and reputation. The duty which it teaches us to our selves tends to moderate our unruly passions and subdue those worst enemies to our repose, to preserve our mind quiet, and our understanding clear, and capable of exerting its natural powers. These duties it so enjoins and explains, that if any Christian be ignorant of them, it must be by his own wilful and great negligence. To these it adds baptism and the supper of the Lord, of which the first is performed once, and never afterwards repeated, and the second, as to the frequency of receiving it, is so far left to our own discretion, that it can never interfere with any moral duty, or hinder us from performing any thing that is truly profitable and commendable. Whatsoever was burdensome in the Law of *Moses* was taken away by the Gospel, which is called the law of liberty, as it removed that yoke from

the *Jews*, and imposed it not upon the *Gentiles*. The ceremonial ordinances are abolished, and in their stead a plain and spiritual worship of God takes place.

6. The Gospel is grace, as it is a gift offered to all, an invitation from which none are excluded. It does not, like the Law of *Moses*, distinguish one nation from another; it is a religion confined in none of its rites to particular places and people, but fitted for universal use.

It is true indeed, that many nations have been and are ignorant of it, and that it has not been published to the whole world, God has not thought proper to acquaint us with the reasons why he permits this*, but we may be certain that, though we cannot search out all the ways of God, yet perfect wisdom does nothing unfit, and perfect goodness nothing unmerciful. We know, and this knowledge is sufficient, that God is represented in Scripture, as the common Father of Mankind, who is good to all his creatures, and incapable of pre-

* Christianity is to be accounted as a favour; and for favours it is not necessary to assign any reason, besides the will of the supreme Donour.

judice and partiality, and not willing that any should perish; that every one shall be accepted according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not; that to every one is given a light to guide him, and a law, either written or unwritten, either revelation or reason, by which he shall be judged.

7. Grace in some places of the New Testament means those extraordinary powers which the holy Ghost conferred upon the Apostles and first believers, by which they were enabled to convert *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and to instruct Christians, and to give a sufficient testimony to the truth of the Gospel.

8. Lastly, Grace sometimes means goodness or moral virtue. In this sense the Gospel is grace, as it sets morality in a clear light, and enforces the practice of it by the best and most effectual motives; as it produced, when it was first preached a wonderful and happy change in the behaviour of those who received it, and as it continues still to make Christians, if not so good as they ought to be, yet far better than they would have been without it.

It

It will look like dissimulation and insincerity to pass by an argument so often urged against the Gospel, as it is grace, namely the doctrine of future punishments contained in it.

At this sad thought, say they, all these fair and pleasing ideas of heavenly grace and overflowing benevolence seem to droop and fade away, and the soul, rather than to be exposed to the bare possibility of undergoing such evils, would willingly † take refuge in a silent everlasting insensibility, would have chosen not to have been at all, if such a choice could be supposed possible, rather than to have been called forth into being on such dangerous terms.

That God is good, seems to be a sufficient answer. At present, objections must be impertinent, and solutions imperfect. Let us wait till the righteous Judge appears, and then these and many other difficulties will be removed. In the mean time we may rest satisfied with this, that sin

† Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man, did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?— &c.
— Him after all disputes
Forc'd I absolve.

Milton Par. Lost. X.
shall

shall neither enjoy an impunity irreconcilable with God's justice and majesty, nor endure sufferings inconsistent with his mercy and clemency.

It is, I think, generally supposed, that there will be a great variety of punishments. To be deprived of some good which by a proper conduct might have been secured and obtained, if it be attended with dissatisfaction or regret, is certainly a punishment; and if it always lasts, an eternal punishment. He who is in this condition, has lost his rank, and is placed far beneath many of those who were once his equals, without a * possibility of retrieving the loss.

No less various may be the recompenses. The inexhaustible Fountain of good has *more than one blessing*. He has gifts of a lower sort for those who are not worthy to *sit down on the right or on the left hand of his Son*. *In his house are many † mansions*,

* ——— frustra sectabere canthum,
Cum rota posterior curras, et in axe secundo.

Persius, V. 71.

† Multa in thesauris Patris est habitatio, Christe,
Disparibus discreta locis, non posco beatâ
In regione domum, &c.

Prudentius Hamartig. 952.

in

in his wide-extended kingdom there may be habitations, remote perhaps from his throne, yet not beyond his favourable influences, situated within the realms of light, and appointed for beings of moderate improvements, but of good inclinations, who shall be permitted to adore him at a § distance.

II. We have considered the Gospel as it is grace ; let us now, secondly take a view of it as it is truth.

The Gospel is frequently called the truth.

I. It is so called in opposition to the * falsehood of *Paganism*, which had overspread the world. The ignorance of the *Pagans* and the errors into which their vices had led them are represented in the New Testament by the strongest expressions. It is there said that they knew not God, that they did not like to retain him in their knowledge, and that they were without God in the world. The meaning of which seems not to be that the *Gentiles* were all

§ ————— with whom would I
Gladly behold though but his utmost skirts
Of glory, and far off his steps adore.

* False Gods are called *lies* in Scripture. *Grotius* on
Rom. I. 25.

atheists,

atheists, and absolutely and wholly ignorant of God, but that they glorified him not as God; for as in the language of the Scriptures, to know God is to obey him; so not to know him, is not to honour him, and all wicked men are called unbelievers and men who know not God. The *Gentiles* had not indeed quite lost all notions of the excellence and perfections of the Divine nature; they generally acknowledged one supreme God, and some thought him to be as good and as wise as he was powerful; but * with him they adored inferior § Deities. To these many *Gentiles* ascribed

* Some philosophers, at last, in their refinements upon religion, represented the supreme God as above all adoration, and not to be worshipped, like inferior deities, by prayers and praises, but only by a silent sort of contemplation. *Constat ex L. 4. Cyrilli contra Julianum, Porphyrium existimasse solos deos mundanos colendos esse, non autem Supremum illum, Fuit et hæc plurimorum ex scholâ Platoniciæ opinio. Gale ad Jamblîch.* More to the same purpose may be seen in *Fabricius de Ver. Rel. Christ. c. 8. p. 315.*

§ Those *Pagans*, who were not atheists or sceptics, seem generally to have been polytheists, that is, to have acknowledged one supreme and many inferior Gods.

The ancient *Chinese* are to be excepted, if we may give credit to *Louis Le Comte*, who in his relation of *China* says, that for the space of near two thousand years they preserved the knowledge of the true God, and that they were not corrupted

ascribed much weakness and wickedness,
and

corrupted with idolatry till eight hundred years before Christ. Other Writers there are, who say that the old religion of *China* was indeed free from gross idolatry, from the worship of images and of dead men; but that it appointed the worship of Dæmons, or inferior deities, who were to be adored besides the supreme God. See *Fabric. Luc. Evang. cap. 39.* and *Bayle Dict. ZOROASTRE*, p. 2930. not.

Concerning the ancient *Persians*, see *Hyde, Rel. Vet. Pers.* and *Fabricius, Bibliogr. Antiq. p. 30, 31,* and *Cudworth.*

The *Arabians* before *Mohammed* are said to have acknowledged only one God; but besides him they worshipped inferior deities, Angels, Saints, &c. as mediators and intercessors. See *Prideaux Life of Mahom.* and *Salé's Coran. Prelim. Disc. p. 14. &c.*

Cudworth observes, that from the words of *Onatus the Pythagorean* in *Stobæus*, it plainly appears that in his time there were some who acknowledged one only God, denying all those other Gods then commonly worshipped. And indeed *Anaxagoras* seems to have been such a one — and some such there were also amongst the ancient *Ægyptians*. — Moreover *Proclus* upon *Plato's Timæus* tells us, that there has been always less doubt and controversy in the world concerning the one God, than concerning the many Gods. *Intell. Syst. p. 233.*

Anaxagoras held matter to be self-existent; and *Gerard Vossius* was mistaken in thinking that this philosopher believed the world to have been created, because *Nān esse dixit principium mundi.* *Theol. Theol. Disp. 1. p. 5.* *Nēs*, according to *Anaxagoras*, was only ἀρχὴ κινήσεως, the first mover, the cause of motion, and the former of all things.

Lucian describing and deriding the various opinions of the philosophers concerning the Gods and the world, speaks of some persons who maintained the unity of God. His words are remarkable : καὶ οἱ μὲν ἴες ἄλλες ἀπαλίας θεὸς ἀπελόσαν-
τες,

and worshipped them in a way not * unsuitable to their supposed nature. They

ἴες, ἐνὶ μόνῳ ἴην ἰῶν ὅλων ἀρχὴν ἀτένεμον· ὥς τε ἡρέμα καὶ
ἀχθεσθαι με, ἰσοδύστην ἀποείαν θεῶν ἀκούσῃα. οἱ δ' ἐμ-
παλιν ἐπιδάφιλευόμενοι, πολλὰς τε αὐτὰς ἀπέφαινον, καὶ
διελόμενοι, ἴδον μὲν ἵνα πρῶτον θεὸν ἐπεκαίλυν, τοῖς δὲ ἰὰ
δευτέρᾳ, καὶ ἰσὶα ἔνεμον Ἰῆς θεοῦ ἵος. *Icaromen.*

Now if we consider how hard it is to produce *Pagan* philosophers, who taught the unity of God in so very express a manner as is here represented by *Lucian*, we shall be inclined to think, that he had other persons in view. Some says he, make a sad scarcity of Gods, expelling them all but one, and giving him the whole power and management; others are more bountiful, and divide the divinity into a first, a second, and a third God. I think the words will bear this sense; and, if so, *Lucian* might perhaps intend to scoff at the *Jews* and the *Christians*.

The more refined kind of polytheism seems to have been the doctrine of one God and Father of all, who governed the world and administered human affairs by the interposition and offices of beings inferior to himself and superior to us, in a looser sense call'd Gods, who were of a middle nature between God and men, who presided over this lower world, and who, as mediators, conveyed blessings from God to us, and offer'd up our adorations and thanksgivings to him. Notions like these had been adopted by some *Jews*, and by some of the first *Gentile* converts to Christianity. *St. Paul* therefore exhorts the *Colossians* to place their faith and trust, not in Angels, but in Christ, as in him by whom alone we have access to the Father, 11. 18. where see the Commentators, and *Whitby*, p. 466. Vol. II. and on *Hebr.* 1. 10.

* See *Juslin M. Apol.* II. p. 128. and *Dr. Thirlby's* notes, and *Grotius de Satisfact.* c. 10.

worshipped

worshipped God in his works, in all things, and deified the several parts of nature; they worshipped him under emblems, symbols, sensible representations and images. They deified dead, and sometimes living persons, the former often out of injudicious gratitude, the latter usually out of sordid flattery. Amongst the lower sort superstition prevailed, amongst the better, uncertainty * and doubt. And thus not making a proper use of their reason, they were ignorant, or not sufficiently persuaded of those religious truths upon the knowledge and assurance of which our happiness even in this life in a great measure depends; for if we take away the firm belief of a merciful creator and preserver of the world, whose providence extends it self over all, and whose goodness protects and will reward those who serve him and trust in him; a man can enjoy no rational peace of mind, no true and well-grounded and lasting satisfaction. He cannot support himself in

* *Ibant obscuro sola sub nocte per umbram.
Quale per incertam lunam sub luce maligna
Est iter in silvis; ubi cælum condidit umbræ
Jupiter, et rebus nox abstulit atra colorem.*

Virgil.

the

the troubles inseparable from life. Scarce can he rejoice even in the days of prosperity, which, he knows, must be of no long continuance.

If it were true that there is no God, and we could be certain of it, it would be a truth which a rational being could not forbear to mourn all the days of his life. Man would then be exposed, friendless and fatherless, to every kind of evil, under the dominion of blind Chance or unrelenting Necessity ; nor could he be sure that death would put an end to him and to his sufferings, and that he should not be drawn by a fatal Chain of things from this bad state to a worse. But all that we see without us, and all that passes within us, tells us in the silent language of nature, that there is an Author and Governor of the universe.

The Gospel gives us a just and amiable description of him. It teaches us that there is a God in whom we may confide, and whom, if we love virtue, we shall certainly love, to whom we may * address

R

our

* The duty of man is threefold ; to God, to his fellow-creatures, to himself. The *Gentiles* had juster notions of the

our selves for the relief of our wants, and the pardon of our offences. It teaches us that God is not such a Being as some of the *Gentiles* esteemed him to be, not a being offended easily and without cause, and pacified by frivolous ceremonies, not a being enslaved to necessity and fate, not a being who takes no notice of the world, and cares not whether men be virtuous or wicked, nor one who regards only great things, and cannot or will not inspect all; but such a being in every respect as a good man would wish him to be, and infinitely more perfect than the wisest man can conceive him to be.

The Gospel teaches us to be sensible of our wants and imperfections, and dependence upon God, and thereby * greatly surpasses

the duty of man to mankind and to himself, than they had concerning his duty to God. *Cicero*, I think, passes over this important part of morality in his *Books of Offices*, only just touching upon it, II. 3: *deos placatos pietas efficiet et sanctitas.*

* See the Commentators on *Horace*, *Epist.* I. xviii. 111.

Sed satis est orare Jovem, quæ ponit et aufert :

Det vitam, det opes : æquum mihi animum ipse parabo.

Better is the following observation of *Cicero* : *Multos—et nostra civitas et Græcia tulit singulares viros ; quorum neminem,*
nisi

surpasses *Pagan* philosophy in enforcing
humility.

nisi juvante Deo, talem fuisse credendum est.—*Nemo igitur vir magnus sine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit.* De Nat. Deor. 11. 66. And of *Maximus Tyrius*, who supposes that virtuous minds have *ξυναγωνισὴν θεὸν καὶ συλλήψεις*, *Dijs.* xxii. and of *Seneca*, who says, *Bonus vir sine Deo nemo est. An potest aliquis supra fortunam, nisi ab illo adjutus, exsurgere? ille dat consilia magnifica et erecta. In unoquoque virorum bonorum, Quis Deus incertum est, habitat Deus.* Epist. XLI.

* The word *humilitas* is used by *Latin* writers in a bad sense ; but that this virtue was not quite unknown to them, and to other *Gentiles*, may be proved thus : They acknowledged that pride or self-conceit was a vice ; they must therefore have perceived that there was a virtue contrary to it, and that it consisted in thinking soberly of our selves, and as we ought to think, and in acting suitably to such thoughts, and as they sometimes use *μέγα φρονεῖν*, *ὕψηλα φρονεῖν*, in a bad sense, they must have allowed it to be commendable *μέτεια καὶ ἀνθρώποις ἴσα φρονεῖν*. They had also a name for this virtue : the *Romans* called it *modestia*, *moderatio*. *Barrow* says in one of his Discourses, that the word *candor* answers nearly to *humility*. If he had thought at that time of *modestia*, he would have prefer'd it to *candor*. The word *demissus* is also found in *Latin* authors to denote a good disposition ; it answers to *ταπεινός*, and it means *humble*, *modest*, *meek*. *Plato de Leg.* IV. p. 715, 6. recommends humility towards God : *ὁ μὲν δὲ Θεὸς, ἀρχὴν τῆ καὶ τελειότην, καὶ μέγα τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων ἔχων, εὐδαιμον περαίνει κατὰ φύσιν περικορευόμενος. τῷ δ' αὖ ἐντέλειαι δίκη τῶν ἀπολειπομένων τῷ θεῷ νόμος τιμωρὸς ἧς ὁ μὲν εὐδαιμονήσκει μέλλον, ἐχόμενος, ἐντέλειαι ταπεινός [καὶ] κεκοσμημένος. ὁ δὲ τις ἐξαρθὲς ὑπὸ μεγαλαυχίας*

Deus omnium rerum et principium et medium et finem

The Gospel has taught us more than we could else have discovered † concerning our state hereafter.

It is true that reason furnishes us with very probable arguments for the souls immortality, and that many in all ages have

in se habens, rectam viam peragit, explicans vim suam atque potentiam per hanc universi naturam, perque omnes illius partes circumquaque permanens. Hunc sequitur justitia, eorum qui a divinâ lege deficiunt ultrix atque vindex, cui quidem justitiæ is modesto et composito animo adhæret qui felix est futurus, ejusque ductum et auspiciū constanter persequitur. Qui autem superbiâ elatus est — It is certain that *Ἰακωβὸς* has a good sense here. See also *Origen* contr. *Cels.* VI. p. 285. where this passage is quoted.

As they are in an error who say that humility was absolutely unknown to the *Pagans*; so those learned men seem no less mistaken, who will needs have it that this virtue is very frequently mentioned by the philosophers. When you expect proofs of their assertion, they give you passages which recommend patience under injuries and calamities, a contempt of honours and power, of glory and popular applause, of censure and reproach; and at the head of the humble and meek they place the ragged regiment of the *Cynics*, many of whom were not less proud than poor. See *Huet. Aln. Quæst.* III. 8.

† See *Whitby* on *Tim.* II. I. 10. and *Le Clerc* Proleg. Hist. Eccl. Sect. I. and II. *Varro* commemorare Deos cœpit, — ostendens in omnibus, quod sit cujusque munus, et propter quid cuique debeat supplicari. In quâ universâ diligentia, nullos demonstravit vel denominavit Deos, a quibus vita æterna poseunda sit. *August.* de Civ. Dei. VI. 9.

believed

believed it ; nevertheless it is true also that the Gospel has given us a clearer knowledge of our future condition.

For, (1.) the best arguments which reason suggests for the immortality of the soul are founded upon right notions of God and of morality ; but before the Gospel was revealed, the common people amongst the *Gentiles* had low and imperfect notions of these important truths, and consequently they were not persuaded upon good grounds of their future existence.

(2.) Though the belief of a state after this was much receiv'd amongst men, yet was it entertained by the vulgar rather as an ancient and long-establish'd opinion, than as a truth founded upon just reasoning. Their ancestors had believed a life to come, and they retained the notions which had been delivered down to them by tradition ; but they could not trace this tradition up to its rise, nor fix it upon an authority which might be trusted.

(3.) They who argued justly enough to conclude from the nature of God and of man, that it was reasonable to believe the immortality of the soul, and to hope that

a future state of happiness should be the reward of a well-spent life, yet could not hence fairly draw any conclusions to their own full satisfaction; for they must have been sensible that they had not lived up to the laws of nature and the dictates of their own reason, and that they had offended the author of their being in many instances. It is true, they might have recourse to repentance and amendment, but how far this would avail they could not certainly know. What could they hope more than to be removed after death into some other world, some other state perhaps not much better than this?

(4.) Many * who believed the immortality of souls, believed also a continual and successive removal of souls from one body to another, and no fixed state of permanent happiness. After death they were to dwell in some other body, and to continue thus changing their abodes, as they supposed that they had already done in ages past. And as in this life they had no memory of their former condition, so the memory of their present state was to be lost

* See *Grotius* on *Ephes.* xi. 12.

in the next. Thus their remembrance at * least, which seems to be no small part of one's self, was to perish by death.

(5.) Some, who in words acknowledged the immortality of the Soul, seem in reality to have taken it away, by imagining that the soul was a part of the Soul of the world, of the Deity, and that † upon its separation from the body it was reunited to it.

(6.) Some endeavoured to prove the souls immortality by arguments which proved too much, which shewed, if they shewed any thing, that the soul was from eternity; whence disagreeable consequences seem to flow.

(7.) Some supposed that the soul should outlive the body, and receive a reward of virtue, but they thought that it was material and subject to dissolution, and that a time must come when it should perish.

* That *consciousness* is requisite in *personal identity*, was the opinion of Lucretius III. 859, and of Tertullian *De Resurr. Carnis*. — *Neque mentem, neque memoriam, neque conscientiam hominis hodierni credibile est aboleri, &c.* — *Si non meminerim me esse qui merui, quomodo gloriam Deo dicam?* — &c.

Justin Martyr, or the old man who instructs him, says much the same. *Dial.* p. 147.

† See *Virgil Georg.* IV. 221.

(8.) Many had so far debased their understanding as to persuade themselves that death was a dissolution of the whole man, and that there was nothing to * hope or fear beyond this life.

Some we find entertaining † faint hopes mixed with || many doubts, others fancy-
ing

* ——— mortem cuncta mortalium mala dissolvere; ultra neque curæ, neque gaudio locum esse. Cæsar apud Sallust. B. C. 50. ubi vide Wasse.

† Hence those common forms of speaking; *Si tamen e nobis aliquid restat; Si quid habet sensus umbra; &c.*

|| Seneca on this subject is ἀλλοπεῖσθαλος, wavering and inconstant in his sentiments. What Homer says of one of his heroes, might be applied to him:

Τυδείδην δ' ἐκ ἄν' γνοίης, πόλλ' ἔρρεσι μέλειν,
'Ἢ μέλ' Τρώεσιν ὁμιλέοι, ἢ μέλ' Ἀχαιοῖς.

Il. E. 85.

Juvabat de æternitate animarum quærere, imo mehercule credere. Credebam enim facile opinionibus magnorum virorum, rem gratissimam promittentium magis quam probantium. Epist. cii. p. 503.

He says indeed, *Dies iste, quem tanquam extremum reformidas, æterni natalis est. Epist. cii. and elsewhere, Animus æternitatis suæ memor, in omne, quod fuit, futurumque est, omnibus sæculis vadit. And, Animus sacer et æternus est. Consol. ad Helv. II. And, Ipse quidem æternus, meliorisque nunc status est, &c. Ad Marc. 24.*

But most of these passages are taken from his *Consolations*, where it behoved him to speak magnificently of the future state of the soul, that he might assuage the grief of those

ing that they should be removed from one body to another, and be perpetual wanderers, others looking upon the grave § as upon their eternal habitation, and sadly

those whom he exhorted to bear patiently the death or the absence of their dearest friends. In other places he talks in another manner.

Besides, the word *æternus* in *Seneca* often means *diuturnus*. *Consol. ad Marc.* *Nos quoque felices animæ et æterna sortitæ, cum Deo visum erit ista moliri, labentibus cunctis, et ipsi parva ruinæ ingentis accessio, in antiqua elementa vertemur.* *Nat. Quæst. VII.* *Non existimo Cometen subitaneum ignem, sed inter æterna opera naturæ.* *Nat. Quæst. II. 10.* he calls the stars *æternos ignes*. And again *Nat. Quæst. VII. 23.* See also ch. 25 and 37. And in *Thyestes* §35.

*Non æternæ facis exortu
Dux astrorum secula ducens
Dabit æstatis brumæque notas.—
Ibit in unum congesta sinum
Turba Deorum.*

Whence it appears, that *Seneca* calls *eternal* whatsoever he thought would last *usque ad ἐκπύρωσιν*, till the Stoical conflagration, and would not perish before the end of the world.

This is no very uncommon use of the word *æternus*, which has also the comparative *æternior*. See *Faber's Thesaurus*.

On the contrary, *longævus* sometimes signifies *immortal*, as *Servius* thinks, on *Virgil Æn. VI. 764.* and the *Scholiast* interprets *μακράτων, ἀθάνατος* in *Sophocles Antig. 999.*

§ It is call'd *DOMUS ÆTERNA* in many Inscriptions. *Gruter, p. DCCLX. 5. DCCXC. 5. DCCCCIII. 6. DCCCCXIII. 6. &c.*

com-

* complaining that the sun and stars could set and rise again, but that man when his day was set, must lie down in darkness and sleep a perpetual sleep.

2. The

* Soles occidere et redire possunt :
Nobis, quum semel occidit brevis lux,
Nox est perpetua una dormienda.

Catullus V.

Ἄι αἱ, γαῖ μαλάχαι μὲν ἐπὶ κατὰ καῖρον ὀλυνταί,
Ἡ γὰρ χλωρὰ σέλινα, γότ' εὐθαλὲς ἔλον ἀνθηθόν,
Ἵστερον αὖ ζώνῃσι, καὶ εἰς ἕλος ἄλλο φύοντι·
Ἄμμες δ' οἱ μεγάλοι καὶ κατ' ἐξῆς ἢ σοφοὶ ἄνδρες,
Ὅππότ' ἐκ πρώτα θάνωμεν, ἀνακοῦσι ἐν χροῶνι κόλῳ.
Εὐδομεν εὖ μάλα μακρὸν ἀγέρονα νήγρετον ὕπνον.

Moschus Epitaph. Bion.

*Alas! the tender herbs, and flow'ry tribes,
Though crush'd by Winter's unrelenting hand,
Revive and rise when Vernal Zephyrs call.
But we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
Bloom, flourish, fade, and fall,—and then succeeds
A long long, silent, dark, oblivious sleep;
A sleep, which no propitious Pow'r dispells,
Nor changing seasons, nor revolving years,*

In Seneca's *Troades*, the Chorus says, 271.

*Verum est? an timidos fabula decipit
Umbras corporibus vivere conditis? &c.
Post mortem nihil est, ipsaque mors nihil, &c.*

Where the Poet, to introduce this fashionable *Epicurean* doctrine, makes his Chorus speak inconsistently and out of character; inconsistently, as may be seen *vers.* 158.

Felix

2. The Gospel is truth, as it is the accomplishment of the prophecies of future favours made under the Law. Christ was the prince of peace, the light of the *Gentiles*, the deliverer of the captives, the preacher of glad tidings, the founder of an everlasting kingdom in a more exalted sense than was commonly imagined by the *Jews* before his coming.

3. Lastly. In the Law was contained an image and representation of good things to come: in the Gospel those good things are brought to light. The Gospel then is truth in opposition to the *Jewish* dispensation, as it is the substance and reality of all those things which are figured by the Law; or as they were mere shadows compared to that solid and substantial truth which Christ has discovered to us.

*Felix Priamus, — nunc Elysi
Nemoris tutis errat in umbris, &c.*

and out of character, because in the heroic ages, in the time of the *Trojan* war, the existence of the soul after death was generally believed, according to *Homer*.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

PAGE 22. l. 4. *read* obligation. p. 25. note. l. 3. r. *be*. p. 51. note. l. 27. r. published. p. 52. note. l. 16. r. which is. p. 76. l. 11. r. led. p. 88. l. 14. r. since. p. 98. l. 7. r. bare, p. 99. note. l. 2. r. *at ut*. p. 105. note. l. 15. r. *πρώτη*. p. 138. note. last l. r. *Malchi*. p. 164. note. l. 14. r. thought it right. p. 196. note. l. 16. r. *du tout*. p. 203. note. last l. r. *quod*.

PAGE 53. Note. l. 21. *and we shall take a pleasure— to die at your command.* καὶ ἡμεῖς ἠδέως φέρομεν τὴν τοῦ σου θανάτου τὸ γέγραπ. I have understood τοῦ σου θανάτου to be, a death inflicted by the Emperor, after he had himself taken cognisance of the cause. Some perhaps may think that it means, a death which a Christian suffers, not for evil doing, but for conscience sake. It may be translated, *and we cheerfully bear such a death, as an honour and a reward,* and the reader may put his own interpretation upon it.

